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**HORACE TRAUBEL**  
**HIS LIFE AND WORK**





# HORACE TRAUBEL

## HIS LIFE AND WORK

BY

DAVID KARSNER

AUTHOR OF "DEBS: HIS AUTHORIZED LIFE AND LETTERS"

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## FOREWORD

**I**N presenting this statement of Horace Traubel's life and work, which is at once an appreciation and an interpretation of his endeavors, I have tried to accentuate the qualities of the man whose significance to me, at least, was measured not by his literary achievement, but rather by the fierce, devoted and lasting love he bore for his fellow men. That love, that social soul of his, that universality of his rare mind — they were the foundation stones of his life; and, blended, they formed the keystone of his monumental work.

As his own introduction to this book implies, Traubel knew that I would write about him. He read the second draft of my manuscript which was completed in September, 1916. The book at that time comprised what are now Chapters Four to Twelve, inclusive. Early this year I resolved to bring my statement up to date, to include his later years, and to publish the record while he lived. To that end I raised a cash subscription list with considerable assistance from those most directly and personally interested in Traubel. It is only by reason of such support indicated that I am now able to send my book forward. I was at work on the final draft of this book when the news came of Traubel's death. That fact necessitated slight revisions of tenses, and the first three chapters. Otherwise my statement is intact in letter and spirit as Traubel saw it.

Well, dear Horace, here's the book at last. We talked of it often together. You, yourself paid for five of these books for five children, and you said you would write your name in them. You said, too, you were proud of your friends when one day a bunch of orders came in. So am I proud of them. The formal, eminent, lettered world may ignore this book as it ignored you. But no matter. You, now away off there somewhere with Whitman, Bucke, Ingersoll, little Wallace, will understand that what sings in the heart cannot be formed into words. You will know now, as you knew the other day, that love, not words, is the thing. Love that understands is self-sufficient.

DAVID KARSNER.

September 28, 1919.  
New York City.

## INTRODUCTION

I'VE been allowed to see this bit of genuinely good work of Karsner's. But is Traubel worth such serious attention? One of Karsner's best friends and a man who knows who's who in literature said to him one day: "Believe me, boy, he's not entitled to it: you're wasting your time." But Karsner kept stubbornly on the job till he got it more or less satisfactorily finished and seems to have some preposterous notion that he can secure a publisher for it some day. Traubel himself, while appreciating and reciprocating Karsner's devotion, has tried to dissuade Karsner. He said to Karsner: "Don't publish it now: wait five years or so." Karsner asked: "Why?" Traubel replied: "For two reasons: first, it'll give you time to study out and solidify your statement: second, it'll give you a chance to change your mind." Why should Karsner commit himself to an enthusiasm he might in a few years regret? But he made light of all entreaty and continued. Who would publish a book about Traubel? It would have to be a man who believed in him against fate. Where is there such a man? Traubel has no market for his own books. Why should there be any market for a book about him? I've been informed lately that Karsner intends writing about Dreiser. Now, there's a man the world wants and enjoys being told about. Dreiser has a market. And a Dreiser biographer will find a market waiting for him. I know a lot about Traubel's personal history. When he was



a young fellow he was a hot advocate of Whitmanism and went for Walt's enemies baldheaded. Walt himself many times cautioned Traubel to "hold his horses," as he used to say. That is, go slow. That is, not claim too much. But Traubel was impetuous in his fiery propaganda. Karsner is much as Traubel was in all that. But the circumstances are different. Traubel had a rich nut to crack. But Karsner has a shell without a kernel. Walt's after fame justified Traubel's passionate protest. But nothing has happened in Traubel's career to justify Karsner's choice. The first thought I had in reading Karsner's quite flowing and vivid narrative was that it was a shame, as his friend had warned him, to waste all that skill in a direction which was likely to foredoom it to oblivion. John Burroughs years ago wrote Traubel a frank letter in which he said: "That part of your work which does not make me laugh makes me mad." At the best Traubel's only known to a handful of people. And even with that handful of people he's only rated as Walt Whitman's errand boy. His own writing is either totally ignored or wholly despised. No magazine in America would print anything that he writes. Even the newspapers have no use for him. To the college he's uncouth. Just the other day he showed me a letter he'd got starting "you dear old fool," and ending "you're a loving old ass, of course, but an ass, nevertheless." Traubel gets me all tangled up and confused. I can't make anything out of him. I should be prejudiced in his favor. But he often provokes me to the profoundest contempt. So I can well understand why the critics never take him seriously. A lawyer said to Traubel: "You're all right, old man, for now and then, but your writing's damned rot!"

It argues well for Karsner's courage that in the face of such facts, and an interminable list like them, he still contends that his hook's not caught in some snag in the mud but that he has a genuine fish on his line. If Karsner had substituted some more plausible name for Traubel's throughout he would have found a publisher for it without delay. How a man as cute as I know Karsner to be could have been betrayed into such an infatuation it beats me to explain. But then we know every man marries the woman none of his friends would have chosen for him. And every woman marries the man none of her other lovers would have chosen for her. When the man marries we say to him: "Believe me, boy, you're wasting your time." And when the girl marries we say to her: "Believe me, dear, you're wasting your time." Perhaps it's not so true that everything's a mistake to somebody else as that everything's different to somebody else. But we marry in spite of everybody's pity. And we choose our books in spite of everybody else's choice. And our pictures. And songs. And what we eat. And no matter what you can think of. We do as we please. And we please to do what we must. And so in the universal scramble everything gets a chance. Every lobster of a man. Every rotten egg. All the god-forsaken monstrosities in art. No man is left behind. No thing. There's an apologist somewhere for every derelict, no matter how feckless. It's by supposing such a saturnalia of idiocy in which the brainiest people participate with the crudest that we can, if not understand, at least excuse Karsner's delusion. Why, Karsner, in a series of chapters of undoubted force and pungency, actually constructs a sort of Traubel myth, in which we discover to our surprise

that the man we've always only tolerated as a fair to middling ordinary companion in the commonplaces of life is after all gifted with uncommon spiritual graces. It's a theory too outrageous to be considered, constructed and propounded with gravity and logic. I concede the importance of the significant exceptional individuals the world over who accept Traubel if not at Karsner's valuation at least as voicing a forceful democratic seership and international vision of fraternity. And I also consider that Traubel has a loving heart whatever mistakes or exaggerations or wilfulnesses his head is guilty of. But even with such qualifications allowed for, this problem still remains open, and I'm not the man to settle it. He's shown me some of the extraordinary letters he gets from day to day exhibiting this side of his case. But he always does so with the air of a man unconvinced if not unconcerned. He frankly says he's a much greater tangle to himself than he would be to anyone else, enemy or friend. I feel finally like saying of Karsner's book what Burroughs said of Traubel: "That part of it which does not make me laugh makes me mad." Though I don't really allow that any of it makes me mad. But it certainly makes me laugh.

June, 1918.

HORACE TRAUBEL.

## CHAPTER I

"I GO WHERE MY HEART GOES"

**H**ORACE TRAUBEL lived one of the fullest and freest lives it is possible for a man to live on this earth. Like a giant tree, he rooted himself in hardened soil and was braced to weather any storm that might attack him. The fiercer the winds of adversity assailed him the more determined he became to stand his ground and challenge the elements that would subdue him. There were times in his life when it seemed as if he would indeed be conquered by the winds of fate and chance, but when the fury had subsided he was still on deck, compass in hand, steering his craft over treacherous shoals, and smiling like a radiant boy unconscious of the perils through which he had traveled, feeling a supreme satisfaction over the adventure.

No matter how dark the clouds that hovered over and around him, Traubel knew that shadow was but the reverse of shine, that night was only another name for the same condition that produced day, and that dark but suggested the coming light. He knew that the door that shut him out kept others in, that the lock that barred him was equally forbidding to those behind it. None realized more clearly than he that in every sorrow there was an element of joy, however slight and obscure; that in every full and satisfying cup there were dregs, however bitter.

Traubel was more than a poet; more than an editor; more than a literary critic, the like of whom America has never known; infinitely more than the interpreter of his friend and fellow, Walt Whitman. He was the spirit of elemental love. He was the harbinger and the herald of justice and equality between man and man, nation and nation, ultimately pleading for the universal spirit in the individual and the international qualities of the state.

Supremely individualistic in manner, matter and method, he had a care and a concern for the fortunes of others that was beautiful to behold. He insisted upon living his own life at all hazards and costs; thinking, speaking and writing his own thoughts no matter what the penalty. In a sense he was ruthless in his individualism. But none suffered remorse keener than he when he felt he had caused pain to come to another. He was by turns arrogant and humble. He was both assertive and reticent. He was at once a seething sea, rolling, restless, crashing and crumbling — and a placid stream shimmering in summer's sun and singing as it rolls along in shadowed lane or flowered field. He was a fond friend to those who shared his life and his ideals, and a fierce foe to those who opposed the social principles and precepts of life upon which he had based his being. He was a hail fellow well met by any person, yet Traubel selected his friends with great care. The association of people was as necessary to him as the food he ate. He could not endure loneliness. That is why he loved the cities and shunned the country. Turmoil, noise, booming trains, whistles of boats, loud voices in heated argument, fierce debates, conflict and contest of ideas and emotions, factory

whistles, the shuffle of feet on pavements, the shrill cries of newsboys, symphony concerts and the applause, baseball and the shouting "fans" — these were the things Traubel loved and in which he moved and had his being. The rich red color of life appealed to him, captured his heart and lured him on and on, up the cliffs and down the vales. He was caught in the whirling currents of life and thoroughly enjoyed the thrill of chance and adventure.

Though he was a poet, the story-book lives of the poets did not apply to him. No moon mush nor star gazing found their way into his verses. But there was life in them, rich and red, vibrant and vital, inspired and inspiring. He might have written with a trip-hammer instead of a pen, for his poems and prose plumb the very depths of all there is of life, and nothing was too sacred for him to attack, nothing too rough for him to condone if it had the elements of justice and love in it. His was the loving heart, his the universal mind, his the social soul. "I go where my heart goes," he once wrote, and his heart led him into all the highways and byways of life. He saw it all: He missed nothing.

Traubel was most methodical in his habits of living and working, yet he was indeed prodigal and imprudent. I have often heard him say that as boy and youth he took care of himself, never "bummed around," "bought books with spare money that other fellows used to spend on women," and lived regularly in the sense that he never wasted his substance nor drained his vitality in ways common to youths coming of age. Yet he robbed himself of necessary sleep, believing absolutely that four hours were sufficient for

him. He would work eighteen or twenty hours a day, with a little play in between, and sleep four or five at the most. In his later years, prior to his illness in 1918, Traubel ate practically all of his meals in restaurants. He worked so long and so hard and slept so little that his body seemed to demand much food, and Traubel often ate at irregular hours and such foods that would challenge even a cast-iron stomach. Having very little money at any time, he was obliged to first scan the column of prices on the menu cards before he looked to see what he wanted to eat. He invariably complained that he did not eat what he wanted, but what prices forced upon him. But what he missed in quality he made up in quantity.

His writing and editing of his paper, *The Conservator*, required all of his time and allowed no moments for exercise. He would travel the streets in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, wherever he happened to be with his friends, at all hours of the day and night, with no thought of inclement weather. He would not wear rubber overshoes, rarely carried an umbrella, and would not wear an overcoat on the coldest winter day. This way of living, coupled with the fact that in 1909 he met with a severe accident on a Camden ferry boat going to his home from his office in Philadelphia, when a horse knocked him down and trampled upon him, crushing his ribs, gradually wore him down and reduced his marvelous powers of resisting physical ills. His intense mental work tired him greatly, and even before his last illness, he would often sleep at his desk, in a theater, a moving picture show, or at a concert. He had burned the candle at both ends.

The first real break came in 1914 when he was ill

almost to extremes. That sickness was his first, but it marked the beginning of the end of his life. He was never the same man physically again. Rheumatic fever was the trouble at that time, and it left him with a valvular heart leakage. One could not say just how much damage was done to him by the five years of the World War, but it is my opinion that the emotional strain caused by the bloody conflict, and the fact that the hurricane of war swept some of his dearest friends into prison, while others of them renounced the ideals of their lives and became apologists for the war makers, was no small factor in shortening his days. Being hypersensitive and intensely emotional, such logical consequences of the world's insanity caused him terrific mental agony and wrenched his soul. The World War was the colossal collapse of his dreams and even though he lived to see it "fought to a revolution," as he prophesied it would be in 1914, and took great heart from the social revolution in Russia, the political revolution in Germany (the native land of his father), and the threatened social and economic upheavals in other countries, the initial blow had been struck and it went straight to his heart. Since the latter part of 1917, Traubel was permanently ill, although he believed he would ultimately recover. In the summer of 1918 Traubel became very ill and in July he saw his old office in Philadelphia for the last time. He left it in charge of his faithful printer, James Hebron, a man older than himself by perhaps ten years, and who had set the type for *The Conservator* for ten or twelve years.

It was that summer when he had a hemorrhage which impaired his sight temporarily and which was accompanied by a shock that paralyzed his left leg



from the hip down. Even prior to this shock Traubel limped a little in his left leg, but he ascribed the trouble to what he called ptomaine poisoning. It seems apparent that the seat of his trouble was really deeper than what he thought. As far back as June, 1917, Traubel had an acute heart attack which nearly took his life. It was the night before his daughter, Gertrude, was married in New York. Mrs. Traubel was in New York with her daughter assisting in preparations for the wedding. I had been with Traubel at his office all the evening. He was in normal spirits and seemed in good health. Shortly before two o'clock in the morning he locked his door and we rode down Market street to the Camden ferries. As was his custom, he stopped into a dairy lunch room. That night, I recall, he ate a large portion of baked beans, an order of wheat cakes, coffee and doughnuts. He was interested in the waiter, who was of German birth, and who had told him that two of his brothers had been killed in the war. As he ate he talked rapidly with the waiter about the war in general and seemed somewhat excited, but no more than usual, I thought, in discussing such a subject.

When we got to Camden Traubel saw that he had missed the last car home. He was greatly agitated. It was a calm June night and I was rather glad that we could walk, feeling that exercise would assist him to digest his food. When he reached 200 Elm street, his home, he excused himself and went at once to the bathroom on the second floor. I made a light in the dining room and read the morning paper. After a rather long while I became uneasy over his absence and went upstairs. Horace was suffering agony for want of breath. Being thoroughly ignorant of the cause of his

trouble, I thought he had acute indigestion. His face was ghastly green, and every pore of his body exuded perspiration. His breathing was belabored and very loud. He would not allow me to call a doctor, and refused to tell me where I could summon one. My fright quite overwhelmed me, and in a feeble and awkward way I ministered first aid service. After three hours he went to bed, and I propped pillows behind his back as he said he could not sleep lying flat in the bed. At ten o'clock he was up as usual, somewhat pale and weak, but he went at his daily routine as though nothing had happened. That same afternoon we came to New York together and attended his daughter's wedding. I asked him if he had ever suffered such spells before, and he said he had had only one, and that a little while previous in Boston. It is apparent now that Traubel's spell with me alone in his house at Camden was one of the heart, superinduced and aggravated, perhaps, by what he had eaten.

Traubel seemed to have had some queer notion that his body was immune from the ordinary ills. He paid very little attention to it. He overate and exacted from it the severest tasks. He thought nothing of racing up four flights of stairs a dozen or less times a day to his office. He made light of all warnings of health-care, and often ridiculed others who were more cautious than he.

In the fall of 1918 Traubel, with his wife, Anne Montgomerie, accepted the invitation of William Leslie to visit him and his family at their home in Norwich, Connecticut. His physical condition became slowly and steadily worse. He suffered a severe attack of the heart while there, and upon one occasion almost died. But few of his many friends knew the

critical state of his illness. Each prostration left him weaker in body, but the virility of his mind was never impaired. He could not walk without the aid of a cane, and he dragged his left leg in a very slow manner. Naturally, this condition caused him to lose considerable weight, and his rotund and chubby figure was soon reduced to slenderness without the qualities of emaciation.

In April, 1919, Traubel and his wife came to New York. They rented one room in a rooming house on West Twentieth street, near Ninth Avenue, a block from the home of their daughter, Gertrude Traubel Aalholm, her husband and infant son, Malcolm.

During the few weeks that Traubel was at the Twentieth street house he seemed to be getting along fairly well. He was extremely weak but suffered no pain. His appetite was always good, but his food was limited and his diet chosen with great care as his physicians were of the opinion that improper and too much food was a contributing cause of his illness.

He was glad to get back to New York again, one of his old stamping grounds. At times he fancied that he could go around with his flock of friends as of old. But he soon realized that with him those hectic days were done. He was an old man now, feeble in body only, limping on a cane, virtually helpless in the physical sense, and depending more and more upon the aid and comforts rendered to him by his wife and friends.

## CHAPTER II

### TWO BEEKMAN PLACE

**T**HE Traubels came to live at the Karsner home, Two Beekman Place, about the first of May. There were just three of us, Rose, of whom Horace was very fond; our daughter, Walta Whitman Karsner, nearly five years old, whom he loved dearly, as he did all children, and myself; and only two of them, Horace and Anne Montgomerie. We occupied the parlor floor and basement of a four story brown stone apartment house facing the East River. Horace was given a table that fitted into one of the windows of the front room looking out upon the river. The room was fairly large, airy and sunny. There was no obstruction to the view of the river with its constant traffic and Brooklyn on the farther shore. We were in the heart of New York, yet removed from the city's clash and clang by reason of our somewhat remote location. We all hoped that here Horace would be able to rest and write as he willed.

When he first entered the front room he remarked: "This is fine. If I can't get well here, Davy, there's no use trying anything." His and Anne's bed-room adjoined the front room. The first two or three weeks he did not seem to get any worse. Then came a severe heart attack. He dreaded even to think of these spells. Each one seemed to drain his ebbing strength and left him prostrate. Sometimes he felt a warning

of these impending ordeals, and not infrequently they could be forestalled by strong medicines, digitalis, for instance, to promote circulation and heart action. Perfect rest and quiet helped greatly in checking these encounters with what was imminent death.

The first two or three weeks of his stay on Beekman Place Horace came down stairs to his meals. It was a painful effort for him to go up and down the steps, and the journey either way required much time. At first there were little automobile trips, arranged by kind and thoughtful friends, through the city streets and Central Park. The effort of getting ready for these outings became more and more exhausting, and they finally stopped altogether. His mornings sitting at his table by the window writing letters or doing other work connected with *The Conservator* became less frequent, and we were more accustomed to seeing him sitting in a large arm-chair, resting, with his head lying against his hand, or else lying on a couch by the bookcase, with three large pillows under his head, the lower shelves of the bookcase containing his daily letters held together by an elastic, and two or three glasses of water, one or two of which might have contained medicine.

His sight became poor, and it was with difficulty that he read print even of the size of letter used in his paper. He had a large magnifying glass which he seldom used. He seemed not to care to use those articles which suggested infirmity. He would rather forego whatever comforts or pleasures that could be derived from their use. In the early stages of his last illness on Beekman Place he took a lively interest in the current affairs of the day, especially matters pertaining to foreign politics, the peace terms, which he

severely condemned with their makers, strikes and impending social or industrial upheavals. Toward the end of his stay at our home his interest in these things seemed to wane. Sometimes he was too tired to be talked to about them.

Visitors came frequently, and it was a rare afternoon when several people were not in the front room with him. Horace soon wearied of their company, and often he was glad when they were gone.

His voice became husky and thick, and his enunciation exceedingly poor. Even those of us who were with him daily often had difficulty in understanding his broken and half-whispered sentences. He would have the newspapers and the liberal magazines read to him, the reader always being careful not to read those items which might cause him excitement. Toward the end he had his letters read to him, and often he would request that they be read a second time. This was especially true when a letter from a near and dear friend had come.

Although he could not come down stairs to eat with us, he disliked to eat alone, and twice we all had our evening dinner in the large front room upstairs. On these occasions we ate on the table which had been used by Eugene V. Debs in his prison room at Moundsville, West Virginia. Horace loved that table and had much sentiment about it. When visitors came he rarely failed to tell them the table had been used by Debs in prison. Both times that we gathered about it Horace proposed a toast to 'Gene, who had been his friend for many years.

Almost every evening he would sit in the great arm-chair by the window and watch the boats pass. He loved the river and the lights. He could not see

the names on the boats and would ask us to tell him. He had gone up and down that river on many of those same boats to and from Boston, and he loved to think about those full and free days. Often he would propose an ice-cream party among us, and he was always the first to insist that it was his treat. Trifles like that meant much to him. He would often give Walta small change for ice-cream cones or lolly-pops, and he never forgot his promise to her for a treat of this kind once he had made it.

As the day approached for the Walt Whitman Centenary, May 31, 1919, Traubel took a lively interest in the plans and preparations. He was determined to go to the Hotel Brevoort, Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street, where a meeting was held in the afternoon, and the annual Whitman dinner at night. There was a joyful pathos in the appearance of Traubel at this affair. Of course he knew nearly all of those who came, and many who saw him must have felt that Traubel could scarcely live much longer. He was in gay spirits, and in his enfeebled way took part in the festivities.

At the dinner in the evening, however, he was supremely triumphant. There were more than 200 people in the double dining room, and it was hot and close. Traubel sat at a table near the door so he could retire easily if he should feel any ill effects from the gaiety. The informal speeches that followed the dinner had a distinctly revolutionary flavor and this pleased Horace greatly. It was not Whitman who was so much discussed as the peace terms, the Russian Revolution, the curtailing of American liberties, and the mention of the names of Eugene V. Debs and Emma Goldman, in the latter connection evoked

applause from those who had come ostensibly to celebrate "The Good Grey Poet," Traubel's friend.

Helen Keller was present on this occasion and the wonder woman, deaf and blind, and formerly dumb, met Traubel for the first time, although they had exchanged letters for several years. The diners looked on as Miss Keller placed her sensitive fingers on Horace's lips in order to understand his words for herself and without the aid of her teacher, Anna Sullivan Macy. In the forum, Miss Keller was called upon to speak. These were her words:

Dear Comrades and Fellow-Admirers of Walt Whitman: I came here to listen, not to speak. But, since the Chairman has called upon me, being a woman, I avail myself of this opportunity to talk. There are so many here paying eloquent tributes to Walt Whitman, I want to say a word to the chiefest of his lovers, Horace Traubel.

To stand up here and talk about Horace Traubel is like proclaiming the charms and the desirability of one's sweetheart from the housetops. The truth is, I love Horace Traubel. To discuss him in this public fashion is, therefore, somewhat embarrassing, especially as this is our first meeting. But since we are all "comrades and lovers", you will let me tell of my admiration and affection for one whom we all love.

There are two men in Horace Traubel. I suppose that is why we love him twice as well as we love other men. He is a mystic, and he is a realist. His heart is full of dreams and ardent sentiments, and yet he is a most profound observer of men and their actions. He has thought out a scheme of life for himself. His interpretation of the world we live in, while deeply poetical, is very practical and human. He loves the



just and the unjust, the wicked and the good, the rich and the poor, because of the inclusiveness of his nature. These antitheses are revealed in his writings. He is angry with evil; he hates injustice and wickedness. But he holds out his kind hand to sinners and draws them to him with cords of human love. There is but one thing he asks of men and women — that they shall love one another. His kindness and magnanimity are inexhaustible. Indeed, there is something of the Savior about his interest in human beings, and his sympathy with their struggles. To him neither the individual nor the crowd is vile. He finds in each man and in the mass beautiful, common, elemental qualities of humanity. It is upon these qualities that Horace Traubel rests his hopes for the future. For him love, valor, self-sacrifice and the free spirit exist, and they are the only vital facts of life. They constitute the important and essential part of his scheme of a better world. Yet he penetrates far into the structure of our social order, and comprehends what is wrong with it. It is here that the mystic and the realist clasp hands. He is the great Optimist, and his work is wholesome and encouraging. His dream is persuasive and inspiring. That is why we love Horace Traubel.

The dramatic climax of the evening came, however, when one of the speakers proposed that everyone stand up for a few moments in honor of Horace Traubel. As we were standing, Traubel struggled to his feet, overwhelmed by the tribute and manifestation of love and regard. Some of the older Whitmanites were quite surprised at this incident, but the younger element, nearly all of whom were Traubel's friends or

devotees, took it as a tribute due, perhaps too long deferred.

Traubel issued the last two numbers of *The Conservator* from our home, the May and June numbers. Just before his parting, on August 1, he was preparing for the next number which would have been a combination of the July, August, September and October issues. On the front page of the last issue, June, appears this notice:

"Owing to my serious physical disabilities, and the necessity of stopping work altogether for a couple of months, I have applied to the Post Office authorities at Washington, through the Postmaster at Philadelphia, for the privilege of combining the July, August, September and October numbers of *The Conservator* this year. At the date of publication of the current issue I have not received a decision. It is needless to say that all subscribers will receive twelve numbers of the paper in full return for their annual payments.

"Horace Traubel."

There were several matters of a literary nature that held Traubel's interest even up to the moment of his death. He was arranging with his publisher, B. W. Huebsch, for a second edition of his poems, *Optimos*. With the assistance of Frederick P. Hier, he was willing that his prose volume, *Chants Communal*, should be re-published by Boni and Liveright in their *Modern Library* classics. Traubel wrote an introduction for this new edition of *Chants* at Two Beekman Place, for which he was paid one hundred dollars. When the moment came for the actual production of the *Modern Library* edition it was found that the plates of the book, which Traubel owned, had been

destroyed by a printer who issued the second edition of the book in paper covers in 1914 under the imprint of Albert and Charles Boni. The fact of this loss was kept from him, and he never knew of it. He had practically completed a book of labor quotations and references of Robert G. Ingersoll, his friend. Traubel was to write the introduction and a publisher had agreed to bring the book out. Always a prolific writer, Traubel published most of his work in *The Conservator*, and gave a good portion of it, without remuneration, to publications of the radical and liberal variety. One of his books little known is entitled, "The Dollar and the Man". This book contains many of the best cartoons of Homer Davenport, for which Traubel wrote the texts, and a rather lengthy introduction.

Traubel wrote his last long poem in the front room of Two Beekman Place. He wrote it in a half-sitting posture, with a heavy sheet of card-board as a support for his paper. He had to take frequent rests as he wrote, and he was glad when he had completed the poem. It was entitled, "Walt, at Bon Echo, August, Nineteen Hundred Nineteen." This poem was written as though Traubel were already at Bon Echo, Ontario, for which place he left on August 1, arriving on August 3, having spent two days at Montreal en route to break the trip. This last unpublished poem was written for a celebration at Bon Echo in memory of Whitman.

Extracts from the poem follow:

I say, Walt, dear Walt:

Ain't it funny, considering the light way they used to dismiss  
you, how they have to eat their words?

They were always so sure you'd come to nothing — that their universities and editorial chairs comprised all heaven and earth;

How they passed you by without a word or with contemptuous words or foul epithets:

We've come upon a milder period, Walt: this year they're saying kind things of you in choruses:

And those of us who were with you when you were outlawed are almost fashionable, so great is the demand for us:

I was going to say I don't know what to make of it all, but that wouldn't be quite true:

For I do know what to make of it: it's a story we're all familiar with: it's as old as anything new:

So here, today, with these friends, I stand with my hat off, acknowledging the ancient lesson:

Dear Walt, it takes me closer to you than ever: I understand better than ever the meaning of my birth in the world spirit.

Walt, I could go on all day in this style: I'm so convinced by these people here and by you: but I won't:

I just feel like as if I was having another chat with you as you sit in the big chair and with me on the bed opposite:

Oh! those blessed old times, Walt! they're sacred to me than the scriptures of races:

They're the scriptures of our two personal souls made one in a single supreme vision:

That's all for this moment, Walt; but it's the whole world of appearance and illumination, for all that.

One evening as we sat alone in the front room, Traubel in the big arm-chair by the window, and me on the foot-stool by his side, he said, "Dave, no one, not a soul, not even Anne, knows what a terrific struggle I have had to put up all my life to be what little I am. Oh God! sometimes it's been awful. The tide always, somehow, seemed to go the other way,

and I trying to be myself was often stranded in mid-stream. It was the utter loneliness of the struggle that made it hard. Let a man try to be himself! Let him try to follow the light of his own soul! What does he come to at the end? A God damned fool! Look at Debs in prison! The world says he's a God damned fool. Look at Wilson and Lloyd George! The world says they're God damned wise men. But who will the re-made world remember and revere? The God damned fools like 'Gene who do the worth-while things that become immortal or the God damned wise men like Wilson and Lloyd George who do the popular things that bring them contemporary notoriety? To be anything at all a man's got to be an ass in the popular esteem. I've always been for the asses of the human race. You'll see. Wait till I'm gone. If I'm talked about at all it will be with a shrug of the shoulder, or a solemn shake of the head: 'What an ass he was, braying about brotherhood and all that kind of bunk. What a God damned fool he was not to know this is a practical world. And just look at the rag-tag, bob-tail crowd he traveled with! Wasn't it a pity!' You'll hear it all. I've heard a lot of it for thirty years."

A little while later he said: "As you've got to write another chapter to your book, bringing it up to date, making it an inclusive statement, I want you to put down on record how much William F. Gable and Frank Bain have done for me. I want a full acknowledgement made. I could never have continued *The Conservator* if these men had not helped me generously. The damned thing would have gone under long ago. Gable and Bain exhibited a rare faith in us,

They bridged every chasm. These two men, more than anybody else, justified me and my work. They believed in the thing against every odd and every defeat. They have put up the money year after year, and they put up their love day after day, when I was fighting with my back to the wall. Make your statement plain and unequivocal, for that's how I mean it. Without the assistance of William Gable and Frank Bain I could never have amounted to the even ever so little that some people think I have amounted to."

At another time we were talking about the labor movement of the United States and the principal figures of it. He said: "I would like you to put me on record in your book as saying that in my opinion the four greatest, biggest, truest, most lovable men that our labor movement has yet produced are Eugene V. Debs, William D. Haywood, Ben Hanford and Fred Long."

Traubel had two distinct feelings concerning his illness. One was that he was very tired of it all, tired of the terrific struggle that he had put up to live on the terms that he cared for life. He knew that with the best luck he could not go on much longer in his condition, and that even if he improved he would still be stricken with more or less permanent infirmities.

In spite of this feeling, he permitted himself to hope strongly that he would recover. More than that, he allowed his physicians to fool him concerning the real and serious nature of his disease. He would become elated when visitors told him "how well" he appeared and suggested with him some plan or plans for the future. He struggled to live when death had already laid its cold hand upon him. Several months before

he died there was a glassy stare in his large blue eyes, and an ominous pallor in his cheek. His physicians knew the truth. Two of the four doctors who came to the house intermittently to attend him told me, after inquiry, that Horace could not possibly live through the summer. Whatever Mrs. Traubel's own convictions and opinions were concerning her husband's illness, she did not once let down in spirit in her constant association with him. More than any other person, Mrs. Traubel kept alive in Horace the hope that he would ultimately recover, though she did tell him that it would be a long, hard job.

Back of all this, Horace had premonitions of impending death. In the evening by the window he would sit for hours with Anne, Rose and myself; sometimes only one of us would sit with him. Any number of times when I happened to be alone with him in the evenings he would express his wish that it were all over. At such moments, and I found him in many of them, life had lost all romance, lustre and charm for him. He talked but little in those last days at our home. When he did speak it was frequently about Walt Whitman, Robert G. Ingersoll, or Richard Maurice Bucke, all dead. His dreams, he said, were filled with pictures of Walt, and his old friend and greater brother seemed to be calling him. Those were his thoughts in his last days.

Traubel's last writings were principally about Whitman. In the May number of *The Conservator* his poem was called, "As I Sit At Karsners' Front Window." Following is the first verse:

As I sit at Karsners' front window,  
Dear Walt, with the ruffled East River passing below:  
And Brooklyn opposite, and the bridge at the north,

And the interminable majestic boats going up and down stream —

The tugs, lighters, barges, and the huge dignified steamers crowded with people —

And over it all the shifting panorama of the ductile skies —

I think myself back to my young days with you:

I'm overwhelmed by memories of an unforgettable past:

And nothing can persuade me from it:

It fixes me to a moment of inexpugnable time:

I seem to look beyond the life before me to the antecedent life of older years:

And I contemplate it with a joy I cant express.

He was reminiscent in his talks as well as in his writing. He told us stories of people whom he loved, some dead, others still living. At some other time, perhaps, farther removed from the immediate scenes of his waning life which are now omnipresent, sharp-edged and vivid, I may set down some of his final testimonials and affirmations of his faith, spoken to us in the quiet and hush of summer evenings, with the river flowing by a few feet away, with his warm, thin hand pressing ours, with his eyes dim and moist, beholding the beauties of life's farther shore, seeing clearly things with his dim eyes that our sharp vision could never define, knowing that upon his silent lips were words of love, wit and wisdom, the jest and the joke, and the soft chuckle. It is too soon to speak or to write of those long summer days and the longer nights here in the front room at Two Beekman Place. Some other time will do for that, and if that time should never come, some other person will do for that.



## CHAPTER III

"LAUGH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, LAUGH."

THREE weeks before he left our home, Traubel was bent upon going to Bon Echo, Ontario, about twenty-five miles from Montreal, in a portion of the Canadian wilderness. Those who have been there say it is noted for its grandeur of rugged scenery. There is an Inn conducted by Flora MacDonald Dennison, who for many years has been a devotee of Whitman, and who publishes a little magazine at Bon Echo called "The Sunset." Mrs. Dennison had invited Horace and Anne up there. Mildred Bain and her two children, Betty and Paul, were spending their vacation there, and other intimate friends were expected. Horace knew that Frank Bain would go up from Havana to spend his vacation with his family, and nothing would do but he must go. There were days and days of planning and talking about this trip. His old friends, the Bains, were the biggest card that lured him. Mildred Bain was as devoted to him as Frank, and she is his first biographer, having written a series of intimate sketches and appreciations of him and his work and published in 1913 under the title of "Horace Traubel." There was no dissuading him from going to Bon Echo. He would go if he died on the way. The anticipation of the trip and the change, and the greater joy of being with the Bains in what he might have thought were his last days on this earth, cheered and buoyed him. Frank Bain arrived from Havana on

July 29. In the late afternoon of August 1 they started for Canada. That day Dr. William J. Robinson and Dr. B. S. Oppenheimer visited him for the last time. Doctor Robinson told Mrs. Traubel that Horace "would not die on the train. He will live to get to Bon Echo." Traubel's other physician in New York was Philip Cook Thomas.

At the Grand Central station there was a party of his friends to see them off. Horace was in a wheel chair, very weak, but gay, and, in a sense, sad. He had a slight heart attack on the train before they reached Montreal. Two days later he was at Bon Echo. On August 5, he wrote as follows to Rose:

"Here safe. Tired. Hopeful. I'm yours in all real senses of the spirit. I hope I'll come back but not so helpless. Can be of more use to you. I recall the hours with you and Dave and the dear child as a furlough in paradise."

On August 9, he wrote to me:

"I'm better a dim shade but cant brag. I have a fine note from Theodore Debs. . . . Tired still. Damned tired. God damned tired.

Eternally, Horace."

A few days later he spoke of his "terrible weakness," and that he could scarcely hold the pencil while he wrote, or see the paper on which he was writing.

Then came this letter:

"I still feel like the last rose of the last summer. Write me. Tell me how the work is going. The beauty of this place is past all words and every extravagance. No press agent could magnify it. No lie could tell the truth about it. I still feel all in, or out, which ever you choose. Weaker than hell but full of

the love of heaven. I think of you and Dave and Walta and the East River room and the bustle of New York with longing.

With whole heart,  
Horace."

Late in August he wrote us that he, with a party of friends had crossed the lake in three boats and dedicated the great Walt Whitman rock, named "Old Walt" for its ruggedness, hugeness and grandeur. Then they came back and Horace turned the first spade of earth in breaking the ground for the Walt Whitman library. He concluded the note with, "Happy in spirits, but tired in body."

In a note which he wrote to us both on August 23 he said: "Yours is a job for the cradle, mine a job for the grave-digger."

On August 26, he wrote:

"I had a heart attack last night and suffered great agony for two hours. I feel weak today in consequence, but love you with unaltered faith no matter what the experience of the day may be."

The last word from him to us was dated August 28:

"Bad days these for me and Anne's also under the weather. Heart's playing me tricks again. Bad days and worse nights.

Love always, Tired.  
Horace."

Traubel took a turn for the worse after the Bains left, which was during the last week of August. It became necessary for them to visit their friends and relatives in Canada before leaving the Dominion finally for Havana. Horace broke bad with their

departure. It was apparent that life for him from then on hung by a slender thread. He became weaker and weaker. His power of speech was almost gone and his sight dimmed nearly to the point of blindness. His mind was strong, however, and his tireless brain continued to act, but it could no longer direct the energies of his body. When he could still sit up and talk a little, Traubel conversed about Whitman. He would say that he heard Walt's voice calling him from beyond the great rock across the lake.

On Saturday, September 6, Traubel had two cerebral hemorrhages. Death was not far away now. Early Monday morning, with Anne, Mrs. Dennison, a woman nurse, and one or two others standing by his bedside, Traubel turned his face slightly toward them. A wan smile was playing around the corners of his mouth, and he whispered to those about him who were witnessing the final flight of his life, "laugh, for God's sake, laugh." He turned his head. Horace Traubel died at five o'clock. He was in his sixty-first year.

Mrs. Traubel and Mrs. Dennison arrived in New York Tuesday evening with the remains.

Arrangements were made to hold informal services at the "Community Church," Thirty-fourth street and Park avenue, New York, Thursday, September 11, at 3.30 in the afternoon. Although Traubel never had any patience with the orthodox or institutional church, he was very fond of John Haynes Holmes, and his associate, Harvey Dee Brown, of the "Community Church," which was liberal Unitarian, the sect to which Traubel adhered in his boyhood and early manhood. It had been arranged that Brown should introduce Dr. Percival G. Wiksell, one of Horace's life-long friends,

who would then preside. There would be no services in the formal sense. It would be more in the nature of a "Hail and Farewell". The hearse reached the church a few minutes before 3.30. Behind it rolled the limousine containing the pall-bearers chosen by Mrs. Traubel. They were Leonard D. Abbott, Roger Lewis, Bernard Weinig, Frank W. Bain, Frederick P. Hier, Arthur C. Aalholm and David Karsner. Crowds of people were on the sidewalk by the church and it looked as though there would be a convention instead of a funeral. We soon learned the reason for the crowds. The church was afire. Blue rings of smoke were already coming from the roof. Hasty conferences were held, and in a few minutes the hearse rolled out from among the clanging engines and bustling firemen with their hose and axes, to the People's House, a Socialist community institution, at 7 East Fifteenth street. Many followed on street cars, Fifth Avenue busses and subway trains.

The coffin, covered with floral pieces, was carried into the auditorium on the main floor. At the last, Horace was among his people, in the vibrant atmosphere of learning and revolt. Many of us regretted that Horace himself could not enjoy the humor which we found in our failure to attest our faith in him in a church.

Doctor Wiksell read several selections from *Optimos*, a poem to Traubel written for the occasion by his old friend, William Struthers, a prose tribute from Lillian Wetstein Mendelssohn and a telegram from Max I. Mydans. Other informal tributes were read or spoken by Frederick P. Hier, Roger Lewis, Edwin Markham, Thomas B. Harned, Flora MacDonald

Dennison and David Karsner. Helen Ware gave a violin selection. •

Friday afternoon a small party went to Harleigh Cemetery in Camden, New Jersey. The coffin was placed in a receiving vault until a burial lot could be arranged for. At the tomb final words were said in the presence of Traubel's clay by Ralph Westcott, David Cummings, Eitaro Ishigaki; a Camden member of the Socialist Party, and myself. A bunch of red roses were taken from the casket and distributed to all who had come, maybe fifty persons. On November 8, Traubel's remains were finally committed to the earth in Harleigh.

Traubel left no will. He had often said that he wanted his Whitman collection to go to the Library of Congress. The large gold watch which Walt Whitman had given to him in his will, he in turn requested that that be given to Malcolm Aalholm, his infant grand-son. All other personal matters and effects come into the possession of Anne Montgomerie Traubel.

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY DAYS

**H**ORACE Traubel was born in Camden, New Jersey, December 19th, 1858. He was the fifth of seven children. His mother was of Christian, and his father of Jewish, origin. Traubel said he was a half-breed. Early in his life Maurice Traubel, Horace's father, developed pronounced initiative both in character and in thought. Born in Germany of religious parents, Maurice Traubel began thinking his own thoughts in the narrow circle of an orthodox home. He questioned at first silently, then openly, at last breaking all bonds and turning his back once for all on orthodoxy of any order, either in religion, art or literature. It was the Talmud, with its rigid and minute ordering of every detail of life, that precipitated a quarrel between Maurice Traubel and his religious father. The parent insisted that the boy should not only conduct his life and thought according to rules of the Talmud, but should also read the book for himself. On one such occasion Maurice snatched the book from his father's hands and threw it into the fire. The father, aghast at the sacrilege, declared the rebel was no longer his son and ordered him from home. Maurice Traubel went to another part of Germany and pursued his study of art. A few years later he came to America, landing in Philadelphia, a friendless and penniless immigrant, in search of a job. This he secured in his trade as printer, engraver and lithographer. He mar-

ried Katherine Grunder of Philadelphia. Both parents had dropped their church affiliations before they reached mature years.

Traubel furnishes us with a striking note of what his racial origin meant to him. On this point I will quote him in full: "I am a half Jew. My father came of Jewish, my mother of Christian, stock. I am a half-breed. Huxley says a half-breed is a man who inherits the vices of both parents and the virtues of neither. That's a bad lookout for me. I have brothers and sisters. Long before I came along in the family roster my father had ceased to be a Jew and my mother had ceased to be a Christian. I was never taught either Jew or Christian. I was let alone. My father said: 'You will find out yourself what you are.' People sometimes discover me. A man said to me the other day: 'By God! I believe you're a Jew!' I said: 'You're not the first one who discovered it.' A man said to me the other day: 'By God! I believe you're a Christian!' I said: 'You're not the first one who discovered it.' So I cant hide myself. I am unveiled again and again. They ask: 'Are you ashamed you're a Jew?' They ask: 'Are you ashamed you're a Christian?' I answer: 'When I meet a mean Jew I wish I was all Christian. When I meet a mean Christian I wish I was all Jew.' But that seems too enigmatic. 'What the hell are you anyway?' Then I have but one answer left: 'I guess I'm neither all Christian nor all Jew. I guess I'm simply all human.' That's where I have to leave them and they have to leave me. I sat next a man in a restaurant. He got confidential. I dont know what started him. He thought he hated Jews. He said: 'Any Jew's hard enough to bear, but for a real stinker give me a half



Jew!' I assented. 'Yes — that's so.' He brightened up. 'Do you feel the same way I do about it?' I said: 'Sure: I ought to know: I'm one of 'em myself!' He took his size at once. 'Put me down for a damn fool', he said. I did. But that day made him wise. One of my dear friends goes off about the Jew. Often does in my presence. I then say: 'Look out—I'm a Jew.' He shakes his head: 'I dont mean your kind of a Jew.' I say: 'You dont mean my kind of a Jew when I'm present. But when I'm absent there's only one kind of a Jew to you.' So it goes. Something in me tells me I'm a Jew. Something in me tells me I'm a Christian. Something tells me I'm both and neither. But the Jew in me makes me sensitive to some Jewish things. I finds flavors and glints in Zangwill's stories which set me trembling. Yet there are offices or observances which I do not understand. The feel of it all is in me. But the knowledge is not there. I was not raised a Jew. I dont go to churches or temples. Rarely risk it. I feel safer in my outside world. In the streets. With the mixed-up crowd. But I take Zangwill in. I guess nativity will tell. Something about the stories stirs my blood. It gets under my skin. I easily respond to it. Not objectively, perhaps. But atmospherically. The half Jew in me gives me a half look into Jewish history and life. Makes me half competent to apprehend Jewish tragedy. Involves me profoundly in Jewish humor and Jewish prophecy. I have read these stories as if they were portrayals of my own experience. Nothing in them is foreign to me. My father's people never had much to do with him. They never had anything to do with me. I do not even know where they are. Recently by accident I discov-

ered one of my cousins. She has greatly endeared herself to me. But I might have gone on and on to the end and never known her. How then does it occur that I enter so mysteriously into the current of Jewish allegory and romance, into Jewish narrative and song? I cant explain it. I know that it is. That's all. So that Zangwill's book is my book. His stories are my stories. Their refinements and their vulgarities are the tussle of my personal spirit. How strangely life weaves its patterns into vivid memories. How a man goes back to himself as well as forward to himself. The half Christian in me persecutes the half Jew in me. The half Christian in me puts the half Jew in me on the rack. The half Christian in me banishes the half Jew in me. The half Christian in me drives the half Jew in me from land to land, from age to age. The half Christian in me hates the half Jew in me living and dead. I feel the surge and sweep of this conflicting past. And then something else awakens in me. The half Christian in me gets acquainted with the half Jew in me. The half Christian in me sees that it misunderstood the half Jew in me. The half Christian in me is merged in the half Jew in me. Just as the half Jew in me considers and acknowledges the half Christian in me. Just as the half Jew in me finds that it loves the half Christian in me. Just as the half Christian in me finds that it loves the half Jew in me. The half Jew in me passing back and the half Christian passing forth across to each other by the same bridge in me. So that I am brave with Jesus when he goes to the cross. And I am afraid with Pilate who executed him. And I am bigoted and arrogant with Torquemada when he persecuted. And I am horrified though calm with the Jews whom he persecuted. The

two veins of being unite in me. I feel either and both. I read St. Thomas as if it belonged to me and I belonged to it. And I can read Zangwill as if I belonged to him and he belonged to me. Those halves of two things in me make a whole of something. What am I? The half Jew cant name me. The half Christian cant name me. What am I?"\*

When Horace Traubel came into the world the United States was being divided by hostile opinion over the question of human slavery. The most furious revolution that had yet smothered any nation was being preached in the land. Although he had no recollection of it, his baby eyes saw soldiers march away to save the Union and destroy with fire and steel the Southern claim to barter and sell the Negro's flesh and spirit.

Horace was a shy and puny youngster. "Neighbors often told my mother," he said, "that she would not raise me." Religious liberty came first in the education of the children. Several of them attended a Sunday school, and later, when the older ones seceded, and flouted the younger sister because she remained faithful, the father decisively said: "Let her alone children. She must work out things for herself. That is the only way for any of us. We must have freedom." The wisdom of the father was manifested on another occasion when the group of boys were wrangling as to who should first read a desired book. "No mine or thine in this house!" the father declared. "From oldest to youngest, each in his turn. That is the way." This was the law of the Traubel home all

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\* Review of Israel Zangwill's "Ghetto Comedies," *The Conservator*, October, 1911.

through life. We find Horace spending all of his spare moments reading everything he could lay his hands on. His greatest companions were his books. Before he was out of his teens he had read Emerson, Spencer, Carlyle, Ruskin and Whitman. In spite of his wide range of reading Traubel always advised against what he called bookishness. Even in those early days he entertained no regard for books merely as books, but he revered them as moving and comparative records of life and thought. This learning was supplemented by his education acquired in his home in which artists, musicians, thinkers and workers of all orders came and went, each the expounder of some live question of the day.

Maurice Traubel wanted Horace to become a portrait painter, but it is worthy of note that children rarely become what their parents design them to be. Horace did a little crayon work. I have seen some specimens of his efforts in this line and they prove the boy's natural bent for brush work. He attended the public schools in Camden until he was twelve years old, caring for a newspaper route meanwhile. After leaving school he continued his newspaper route, worked as an errand boy and helped his father who, later, kept a stationery store. Horace Traubel, afterward served as a printer's devil in a Camden printery. Next we find him as a compositor in the plant of the Camden New Republic, edited by Harry Bonsall. This work was too staid and orthodox to long hold his attention, so he went over to the Camden Evening Visitor, where he set type, read proofs, wrote editorials and did most of the local reporting. It should be remembered that Traubel was taking a post-graduate course in the most

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approved school of journalism which produced such renowned journalists as Benjamin Franklin, Horace Greeley, Charles Dana, and other notable figures in the early American newspaper field.

The course pursued by Traubel in newspaper work is now almost obsolete and unobtainable in American cities where the daily production of newspapers depends almost entirely upon specialty workers from editorial writers to the boys who pull the proofs. But it is also a fact that today the managing editors, editorial writers, news editors and other having to do with the directing end of big dailies are in most instances men who have had an all-round training in newspaper work such as Traubel acquired.

In addition to this training, Traubel became an accomplished lithographer and not infrequently he would detect flaws in half tones and colored prints. We find him in turn factory paymaster and bank clerk in Philadelphia. Here we see Traubel the wage earner. It was his delight to tell how he worked for wages for thirty-four years. He had a working knowledge of the industrial and social evils which he attacked. His hatred of the past black slavery in the South was no more intense than was his loathing of the present social inequalities. He saw clearly the injustices under which workmen toiled in the factory of which he was paymaster. Later on his eyes were opened to the chicanery of bankers, who glorify and grow fat on the economic evil of rent, interest and profit. He talked and wrote not from his theories only, but from personal experience. He strove first to free himself from short pay and long hours that threatened to sap his vigor and warp his spirit. Bouck White says that

Christ first revolted against the economic thralldom in which he found himself unable to make a decent living at his carpenter trade before he decided to lay aside his tools to preach the most revolutionary propaganda of all time. It was not until he was thrown into jail in 1895 for his activity in the American Railway Union strike that Eugene V. Debs realized how impossible it was to secure the industrial freedom of railroad workers, whose cause he championed, until the entire laboring classes of the United States had achieved their liberty from wage slavery. That knowledge made Debs a Socialist. William Morris realized that to free art the artsman must also be free; that to accomplish good craftsmanship the craftsman must receive the full product of his labor. Hence, we find in William Morris, the artist and writer, William Morris, the Socialist and liberator. So, when it dawned upon Traubel that the freedom of the collectivity meant also the freedom of the individual, he discarded his anarchistic theories to free the workman, and adopted the Socialist philosophy that he might contribute his share towards the emancipation of the workers of the world. In freeing them freeing himself.

There was only one period in Traubel's life when he regretted his lack of formal college training, and that was prior to his marriage. The incident is made note of in his second volume of "With Walt Whitman In Camden," as follows: "I said to Whitman: 'I used to regret that I missed going to college.'

'You regret it no longer?'

'I see now that I was in luck.'

'Good for you. You were in luck. You made a

providential escape. For a fellow with your rebel independence, with your ability to take care of yourself, with your almost nasty resolution to go your own road, a college is not necessary — would, in fact be a monster mountain of obstruction. As between a university course anyhow, and a struggle of the right sort in the quick of every day life, the life course would be the best university course every time.’”

## CHAPTER V

### THE MAN IN THE MAKING

**T**HE eighties and nineties were full years for Traubel. He had lost himself in the world and found himself in man. His scattered ideas had taken root in the soil of coherent philosophy. Having learned the lesson of what was he began to write his message of what ought to be. In 1891 he married Anne Montgomerie, —a woman of broad vision and intellect. One cannot help but feel ennobled by her presence. Her name stood as associate editor of *The Conservator* until the last. Two children were born to them, Gertrude, now Mrs. Aalholm, and Wallace, who died at the age of five years. The daughter, who sprung from this fountain of intellect and love, is a talented musician. Although she never attended public school, at the age of twelve years she had read more and thought more than the average high school graduate. She has her own ideas on all subjects and frequently took issue with her father on some matter of universal interest. When but a mere slip of a girl she staid awake one night until two o'clock until her father came home to get the news from Russia.

"Did the Czar hear the people?" she called to him from the top of the stairs.

"No," answered her father, "the soldiers shot them down." There was not another child in America that night more moved by the sorrows of a people far away.



The <sup>the</sup> family, when together, made their home in Camden, living at different times in little two story brick houses, their latest domicile being at 200 Elm Street which is but a few minutes walk to the ferries to Philadelphia.

During the nineties Traubel held a clerical position in the Farmers and Mechanics Bank, on lower Chestnut Street, in Philadelphia, wrote for newspapers and magazines during his spare moments, and edited and managed The Conservator which he established in 1890. Officials of the bank learned that Traubel was the exponent of certain fundamental principles which they construed as hostile to the interests which they represented.

"I never talked my ideas in the bank," Traubel said, "but when asked for my opinion I gave it frankly." He declared he knew he was a "marked man." There was not the remotest connection between his duties and his beliefs, hence it is quite easy to discern the discordant note.

In order to avoid possible criticism resulting from discharging Traubel because of his radical ideas, officers of the bank resurrected an old rule and applied it to him; it was that no employee of the bank was allowed to conduct an outside business. This referred to Traubel editing and publishing The Conservator. He was given the alternative of retaining his position by abandoning his literary work, or keeping the latter and losing his position. He chose to lose his position. There are many employers who not only demand the best of the employes' time and labor, for which they pay small and unfair wages, but who also strive to

confine the mental and spiritual range of their employees to the interests of their own business.

In 1902 we find Traubel a free agent, devoting himself wholly to editing and publishing his own paper and doing his other literary work. Traubel's early writings were contributed chiefly to the Boston Commonwealth, a literary weekly; the Boston Index, and the Chicago Unity, an organ of liberal Unitarianism. He was the founder of the Contemporary Club, of Philadelphia, and also helped to organize the Philadelphia Ethical Society. In connection with the latter organization Traubel's rebel spirit manifested itself in an illuminating and picturesque degree. Among the members of the society were faddists, persons who enjoyed participation in the discussions as long as they were conducted in a restrained and harmless manner. Traubel's purpose was alien to them. He wanted good to come of the society. He cared nothing for parlor debates. He saw wrongs in the world and he strove to employ every vehicle of expression to right them. The conservatives would have none of it. They went into executive session and when they reappeared on the floor they tried to slip a muzzle over the young firebrand. Above the commotion that followed Traubel cried, "Democracy is my star," and he quit the body forever. Traubel voiced the rebellion of other members, and with him, they left the organization and constructed the Society for Ethical Research. In this group were anarchists, theosophists, prohibitionists, single taxers, Adventists, Socialists and free-thinkers. Traubel presided over their meetings which were held in old Merchantile Hall, on Tenth street in Philadelphia.

One day as he and I were passing the hall Traubel gripped my arm and exclaimed: "Many a time I used to come out here and sit on the curb when the majority appealed from my decisions. Then they would become so interlocked in argument that they would finally send out a committee to wait upon me on the curb and ask me to return to the chair." Anybody could walk in from the street and throw his hat in the ring of intellectual debate. The atheist vied with the theologian for the floor, while the anarchist and Socialist were hopelessly deadlocked in economic theorizing. This, and other similar experiences were not lost upon Traubel. They taught him lessons unobtainable in any school. He began to realize that the worst woes were not the material and spiritual poverty that abounded in the world, but rather an absence of cohesion among radicals to lift the heavy and unequal burdens from the backs and minds of men, women and children trapped in the human maelstrom.

In the first issue of *The Conservator*, March, 1890, we discern the seed of his youthful zeal and intellectual vigor, which, after many years of fierce struggle, blossomed into the fruit of his mature wisdom and spiritual vision. In that first number under the caption, "Greeting", he stated the initial purpose of the paper:

"The *Conservator* originated in the conviction of a group of members of the Ethical Society that the different Liberal Societies of this section (as of all sections), ought to know more of the intimate social and spiritual life of each other than circumstances, if not unwise inclinations, now make possible. This knowledge, it was argued, would lead to a recognition of those things held in common — those ethical veri-

ties, those humanitarian impulses, which defer to none but universal ends.

"It is not pretended that this idea, especially at the outset, can be perfectly embodied. Philadelphia has Unitarian, Hebrew and Ethical Societies, all working in similar lines. Heretofore those have been as strangers one to the other. The Conservator will aim to glimpse in each such cardinal utterances and occurrences as will, brought together, ensure mutual benefits. The record of the daily life of these societies — for example, of studies pursued, charities furthered, whether by platform representatives or the laymanry — is sought for preservation. Moreover, we design to make this a means of brief communication between the ethical societies at large, which at present have no frequent channel of intercourse.

"Our necessary immediate purpose is of course local. But it is determined that this word 'local' shall not narrow the scope of our work. However local the field, we shall keep the spirit to universal methods. Not less than Thoreau at Walden shall we spiritually realize all climes and seasons here at our doors. Chiefly, the intention is, to give a voice to the voiceless, and in a sense to give a united voice to Liberalism as variously spoken for in this community. Whatever the differences, the unities are many more.

"The Conservator is not an organ. It keeps itself free to welcome all the broader tendencies and ethical growths, in orthodox life as in radical. It hopes in the course of its career to have much, indeed, to tell of what the orthodoxy of Philadelphia may be doing to enlarge the vision of man. Although the outcome of the labor of members of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, it is not the organ of that society, but, in the

dream of those controlling it, the broadest welcomer and chronicler of efforts, however partial, towards richer moral possessions. By right of our name we come into limitless ownerships. Experience alone can show if we justify our heritage."

Thus The Conservator was launched. In those early years of its life it adhered to its original purpose. But later on cliques and cults began to sprout from the parent societies whose cause the paper championed. Different groups had different opinions and propaganda which they thought should be aired in The Conservator. Favor to one clique meant courting offense from another group, and again intellectual discord was brought into play until Traubel threw down the gauntlet to those who sought to control his pen, gathered his ideals together and planted them firmly in The Conservator, which he afterward published as his personal vehicle of expression.

Although the business end of the paper had at various times been conducted by other willing hands, Traubel not once, in the thirty years of The Conservator's life, surrendered the editorship even temporarily. Although the January number sometimes appeared in April, and the June number in August, Traubel said, "It doesn't matter, for I'm so much ahead of the age that a few months makes no difference." There is no person who could continue his editorial work. None would attempt it. The paper was mostly all Traubel and was built around and reflected his personality. It reflected the optimism of his soul, mirrored the hopes of the oppressed, challenged those who sat upon thrones, championed the toilers of the earth, and gave voice to the voiceless.

He did not moralize or sermonize. With him democracy was not a cloak. It was a faith.

"All that I am and have," he once said, "I got from the people. It all goes back to them." His poems and prose pieces were inspired somewhere, at sometime through his daily contact with people. They were not manufactured. They were human testimonies. He once told me of a talk he had with an Englishman who had been in the trenches in France at the outbreak of the European war. "We were within three feet of shaking hands," said the Englishman in telling how close the British were to the Germans. Traubel caught the fundamental significance of the Englishman's phrase and wrote a 2,000 word 'Collect' in *The Conservator* on "We Were Within Three Feet of Shaking Hands". He did not write to fill so many lines on so many pages. He wrote to throw so many sunbeams into so many hearts, and so many gems of thought into so many minds of men. Many of the daily incidents of life which others consider trite or of slight consequence contained a certain significance to Traubel. He observed the unobserved. We have ridden in open trolley cars on summer evenings, a decade ago, when he would suddenly direct my attention to nocturnal pictures painted by the moon and stars on the canvas of night. We have seen him struggling to keep back burning tears as he passed a gaunt, starving figure of a man, and the next instant he would empty his pockets in the hands of the unfortunate and curse the social system that took no better care of its children.

An idea in the mind is as much a revolution as a seed in the ground. People are not revolutionary until they think revolution. Platforms and resolutions

without purpose and action are as worthless as a locomotive without steam and wheels. There is injustice in the world not because most people do not want justice, but because only the vigorous minorities battle for justice. There are jails and poor-houses in the world not because people would not rather have their brothers and sisters in hospitals and homes, but because it appears to be more convenient to society to punish the erring and penalize the pauper than to remove the impulse of error and abolish the cause of poverty.

Traubel rarely dealt in the abstract. His mind did not travel in circles. His chart of life contained straight lines to the earthly peace of which he dreamed, and in his course he answered apologetic negation with brutal affirmation. He never said no when he could say yes. Traubel had always been a communist. The Russian Bolsheviki revolution stirred him deeply. He could see but little good in a just political government or in a fair industrial society unless people were drawn to each other in happy accord. He expressed the belief of the Socialist when he said that a co-operative commonwealth would identify the individual. Yet a Socialist administration of political or industrial affairs would have been irksome and intolerable to him if its conduct obscured the identity or throttled the expression of those whom it meant to serve. Traubel argued that the only remedy for this possibility was in the establishment of community, or co-operative, administration of such affairs as effect the welfare and needs of the people. He was a Socialist because he wanted society — the people — to govern. He was in thorough accord with the Soviet government of Russia. He was suspicious of arbitrary rulers in whatever form, and

had faith in the ability of the governed to govern themselves. Traubel went beyond the Socialist political orthodoxy. He could, nor would not, harness his philosophy of life to any one program or platform. Programs and platforms imply restraint. Traubel was a current that could not be restrained. Then why was he a Socialist? Because he held that that organization was the only one which was democratically controlled and which was sincerely working through political channels to abolish industrial and economic inequalities. The orthodox, or Marxian Socialist adheres tenaciously to a material program and holds firmly to "the material conception of history." That was where Traubel broke away and went beyond. He refused to believe that everything we take an emotional joy in is illusion. He was a spiritualist who did not lose sight of the fact that material wrongs can be righted through material channels. I do not wish to convey the impression that all Socialists are fierce materialists. Many have quite contrary beliefs. But it appears to be patent that because of the fierce and sordid economic struggle for existence and the discovered treachery and hypocrisy of many religious creeds, millions of contestants in the battle for life are pinning their faith to material deliverance.

Traubel contended for the larger aspects of the labor movement. If the struggle of the working class hinged entirely upon the bread and butter question it might not be so furiously combatted by those who hold the keys to the social storehouses. If the terrific battle of the worker resulted altogether from small wages and long hours his fight might possibly be made less intense by the ruling class. The industrial masters do not want to starve their workers for they quite clearly



realize that an empty stomach makes a man an inefficient workman. The moderately fed are more industrially productive than the underfed. But the granting of more wages and the lessening of the hours of labor presents an opportunity to the workman to read and to think and increases his social vision. That is more dangerous to the ruling class than increased wages.

When the workman gets up off his knees he is as tall and as erect as his master. As the serf approaches the throne the crown of his king becomes less dazzling. An imitation diamond flashes most when you stand away from it, but if you examine it closely it loses much of its brilliance. The flash of the master's acquired power is blinding to the workman because he stands away from it. But if given a chance to enlarge his vision he will soon see that his master's power is ephemeral and deceptive. He will strive either to usurp his master's throne or abolish it. The spiritual aspect of the labor movement is the desire, not for more wages only, but for opportunity in which to reach out in quest for finer possessions and richer truths. The terrific industrial struggle may account for the materialistic doctrine, but it does not allow for the equally intense ethical and intellectual discontent.

## CHAPTER VI

WITH WALT WHITMAN

**T**HE relationship that existed for nineteen years between Horace Traubel and Walt Whitman was one of the most beautiful recorded anywhere in history. It reminds us of the brother love between Jonathan and David. It was more sacred, perhaps, than the ties of blood that bind father to son. The roots of the two men seemed to have met somewhere in the same spiritual ground. Whitman went to Camden in 1873 immediately following his breakdown in Philadelphia. He had come from Washington and was on his way to the Atlantic coast states to recuperate from a long and painful illness of paralysis resulting from his faithful ministrations to the sick and wounded soldiers of the Civil War. When Whitman crossed the ferry in 1873 he had no idea that he would pass the last full years of his life in Camden. At this period Whitman had but few staunch friends who believed in him. Many of those lived abroad. In America, conservative and conventional despite her pretense of radicalism, Whitman found it harder to gain a foothold for his democratic message. *Leaves of Grass* was not only subjected to the bitterest denunciation by intellectuals, scholars and conventional literary folk, but the author was made the target of the most abusive calumny, lies and suspicion ever heaped upon a literary figure. Whitman went his own way, carved his

path and listened to the turmoil that *Leaves of Grass* created.

Although Camden did not open her arms to receive him, he was immediately welcomed into the Traubel home. Traubel's father had read his message and indorsed it. What is more, he indorsed Whitman, the man. Horace was at that time a mere lad of fifteen years. He opened his boyish heart to Walt and took him in, giving the poet his truest, purest love. Years later, when the boy became a man, Whitman referred to their first meetings. Traubel records the conversation in his third volume of "*With Walt Whitman In Camden*":

"'Horace, you were a mere boy then: we met — don't you remember? Not so often as now — not so intimately: but I remember you so well: you were so slim, so upright, so sort of electrically buoyant. You were like medicine to me — better than medicine: don't you recall those days? down on Stevens street, out front there, under the trees? You would come along, I would be sitting there: we would have our chats. Oh! you were reading then like a fiend: you were always telling me about your endless books, books: I would have warned you, look out for books! had I not seen that you were going straight not crooked — that you were safe among books.'

"I asked him: 'Well Walt — do you still think I go straight — that I am safe?'

"He patted me on the head. 'You've gone from good to better right along: it'd have to be a damned crazy book to fool you. Why, Horace, I tremble in my boots for *Leaves of Grass* every time I see you open your eyes!'

"I said: 'Walt, do you remember the day you buried

little Walter? How we met — walked a bit: how we had a little chat: how you took the car at Fifth street — at Stevens there: how we met again an hour or so later on the boat? I look back and see it all: you said: ‘Horace, it does me good — this air does me good: sort of makes me whole again after what I have gone through today.’

“W. was very quiet for a while. I wondered if he remembered meeting me that day. Finally he stirred around on the bed and exclaimed: ‘Yes! now I do remember it: not all the details you mention but the circumstance: and I remember what maybe you have forgotten: that on the boat you bought some wild flowers from an old nigger mammy who had been all day trying to sell them in the city and was going home dispirited: you bought her flowers and handed them to me. Do you remember that?’ When he spoke of it, yes. W. was palpably moved.”

At another time Traubel questioned Whitman:

“‘Just how do you suppose it came about — this relation of ours?’ Walt, after a pause said quietly: ‘It didn’t come about, Horace. I think it always was.’”

In an introduction to the Everyman’s Library edition of *Leaves of Grass*, (1912) Traubel wrote:

“Everybody found some reason for discrediting Whitman. They went to my mother and protested against my association with the ‘lecherous old man’. They wondered if it was safe to invite him into their houses. I grew up in that atmosphere of suspicion. I got accustomed to thinking of him as an outlaw. But I had no doubts of him.”

Traubel’s absolute belief and confidence in Whitman endured through all the years of Whitman’s declining

life, until he died March 26, 1892, in the little frame dwelling at No. 328 Mickle street.

Traubel saw Whitman some part of each day. As the years fled and the old poet grew more feeble, Traubel's vigilance increased. He catered to Whitman's needs in a hundred different ways. He would bring Old Walt such papers and magazines as he knew would interest him. He ran his errands, not in the sense of obedience but in the spirit of love. Traubel's excellent training in a printing office qualified him to assume the details and responsibilities connected with the printing and publishing of the later editions of Whitman's books. Whitman was the first to recognize this, for in one of Traubel's copies of "Complete Poems and Prose" (1889), Whitman wrote the following inscription:

"To Horace Traubel from his friend the author, Walt Whitman, and my deepest heartfelt thanks go with it to H. T. in getting this book out—it is his book in a sense—for I have been closely imprison'd & prostrated all the time (June to December 1888) by sickness & disability — & H. T. has managed it all for me with copy, proofs, printing, binding, etc. • The Volume, & especially 'November Boughs' and portraits, could not now be existing, formulated as here, except thro, his faithful & loving kindness & industry, daily, unintermitted, unremunerated —

W. W. Dec. 1888.

Camden, New Jersey."

In the third volume of "With Walt Whitman In Camden" Traubel says:

"I told him how good I felt over his inscription in my copy of the big book. 'Ah! you like it?' 'Yes.'

‘So do I!—and what a trifle it is!—the expression of an obligation—nothing more: in fact, the obligation not half said—not at all said.’

“I put in: ‘I did not accept it in that way: I took it in the camarado spirit.’ W. then: ‘Ah! how much better that is. Such a debt can never be paid for in money, in confessions.’”

On Wednesday, March 28, 1888, Traubel began to record the daily conversations he had with Whitman. Nothing was omitted from the record. Traubel had set down a small part of this record in three massive volumes. There is material enough for possibly seven others. Whitman understood and trusted Traubel quite as much as Traubel understood and believed in Whitman.

Once Whitman said to him: “It won’t be long, and I will be dead and gone; then they will hale you into court—put you in the witness box—ply you with questions—try to mix you up with questions; this Walt Whitman—this scamp poet—this arch-pretender—What do you make him out to be? And you will have to answer—and be sure you answer honest, so help you God!”

Traubel says that Whitman was always willing that he should take along with him “the scraps of things” which he started to throw away. Traubel rescued many precious “scraps” from the wood box in Whitman’s room. It is not likely that Whitman threw away much valuable data about himself and his period for Traubel was always cautioning him to be less reckless in such matters. Whitman humored Traubel in this and frequently gave his future biographer letters and portraits, pieces of his own manuscripts and other

documents which Traubel put away with the record of the conversation relating to such material. Whitman did not know that Traubel was keeping such a record, but he knew that Horace would write of their experiences together. In fact, Whitman often commissioned him so to do, as on December 25, 1888, (third volume) :

"I want you some day to write, to talk about me: to tell what I mean by Calamus: to make no fuss but to speak out of your knowledge: these letters will help you: they will clear up some things which have been misunderstood: you know what: I don't need to say. The world is so topsy turvy, so afraid to love, so afraid to demonstrate, so good, so respectable, so aloof, that when it sees two people or more people who really, greatly, wholly care for each other and say so — when they see such people they wonder and are incredulous or suspicious or defamatory, just as if they had somehow been the victims of an outrage." He paused. Then: "For instance, any demonstration between men — any: it is always misjudged: people come to conclusions about it: they know nothing: there is nothing to be known: yet they shake their wise heads — they meet, gossip, generate slander: they know what is not to be known — they see what is not to be seen: so they confide in each other, tell the awful truth: the old women men, the old men women, the guessers, the false-witnesses — the whole caboodle of liars and fools."

"I said to W: 'That's eloquent enough for Congress and true enough for the Bible.'

"He shook his fist at me: 'What do you know about either, anyhow?'"

At another time Whitman said to Traubel:

"You will be speaking of me many a time after I am dead; do not be afraid to tell the truth, good or bad, for or against only be afraid not to tell the truth." Traubel replied: "I promise not to send you down in history wearing another man's clothes." Whitman nodded and said fervently: "That's all I could ask, Horace." The monumental record in three volumes now before the public are proof of how faithfully Traubel kept his promise. Whitman always evaded the questioner. He hated to be prodded into action. In everything he did he proceeded with the confidence that he had all the time in the world necessary to achieve the task before him. In speaking of this trait in Whitman, Traubel said that when he desired an immediate decision from Walt concerning work which he might be doing for him at the time, he would tell Whitman that he had done this or that, knowing that to have done thus or so would be against Whitman's wishes. Whitman would then explode with: "What the hell did you do that for? I wanted it done *this* way," explaining exactly what he wanted done. Traubel would then assure Old Walt that nothing had been done against his wishes, that he simply wanted to know what Whitman *did* want him to do.

"Horace, I do believe you're the only one of the fellows — of all, of all, who is willing to let me do as I please."

"That's not because I always agree with you," Traubel replied. Whitman laughed, and answered: "I know, I know, but you never interfere, you never push in, you never take me by the neck and shake the life



out of me for disagreeing with you about the use of commas, or the sizes of the margins, or the colors of muslins on the backs of books." At another time Whitman confided to Traubel thus:

"Horace, you are the only person in the world whose questions I tolerate. Questions are my *bete noir*; even you at times, damn you, try me, but I answer your questions because you seem to have a superior right to ask them, if any one has, which may be doubted. Cross-examinations are not in the terms of our contract, but you do certainly sometimes put me through the fire in great shape." Walt laughed. Then: "Now Horace, you see how much I love you. You have extorted my last secret. You have made me tell you why you are an exceptional person; you have forced from me an avowal of affection."

Traubel was writing his own thoughts while under the influence of Whitman. One evening in the eighties Walt said to him:

"I am watching your pieces as they appear in the papers and magazines, reading them all: you are on the right track—you will get somewhere. I don't seem to have any advice to give you except, perhaps, this: Be natural, be natural, be natural. Be a damned fool, be wise if you must (can't help it), be anything, only be natural. Almost any writer who is willing to be himself will amount to something—because we all amount to something, to about the same thing at the roots. The trouble mostly is that writers become writers and cease to be men; writers reflect writers; writers again reflect writers, until the man is worn thin, worn through. You seem to want to be honest with yourself. I'm sure I couldn't think of a better thing for anyone."

Whitman acknowledged that Traubel understood him, perceived him, better than any other person. In compiling a record of their conversations, which is so accurate and faithful that it becomes almost a stenographic report, Traubel made use of method. To this he refers in the first volume:

“My method all along has been not to trespass and not to ply him too closely with questions necessary or unnecessary. When a lull occurs I sometimes get him going again by making a remark that is not a question. Other times we sit together for long periods in silence, neither saying anything. One evening during which we had not done much more than sit together, he on his chair and I on his bed, he said: ‘We have had a beautiful talk—a beautiful talk.’ I called it a Quaker talk. He smiled quietly. ‘That will describe it. But, oh, how precious!’ At another time as we parted for the night he said, as he took my hand and pressed it fervently: ‘I am in luck. Are you? I guess God just sent us for each other.’ Another good night had the words: ‘We are growing nearer together. That’s all there is in life for people—just to grow near together.’”

One might wonder how Traubel was able to report Whitman so accurately in the flash and current of their talks. On many occasions there was a third, or even a fourth person present in Whitman’s room at the same time. Traubel’s skill on such occasions was put to the triple, or quadruple, test. In the first place, Traubel had read endlessly and deeply in his youth. He absorbed what he read. No matter who Whitman mentioned in the literary firmament Traubel had heard of or knew something of the work of the person Whit-

man was talking about. He could not have done the work at all had he not possessed a wide knowledge of writers and literature. Frequently, in the dim-lighted room Traubel would be able to make hurried notes while the conversation flowed. At other times this could not be done. Again, Traubel's retentive mind and an almost perfect memory enabled him to put down on paper the entire conversation immediately after he left Whitman's presence each day. Sometimes his notes were written on the ferry boat going to Philadelphia. I treasure the possession of several of these original notes of conversations with Whitman, and they appear in his books exactly as they were written thirty years ago.

In 1906 appeared the first volume of "With Walt Whitman in Camden." The second appeared in 1909, the third in 1914. In reviewing these books critics have called Traubel the "American Boswell." One critic called the Whitman books "the most truthful biography in the language."

In 1893, a year after Whitman's death, Traubel had a large share in editing the quarto volume, "In Re Walt Whitman," a cluster of written matter made up to include several articles much esteemed by Whitman as interpretations of his history, and other pieces — abstract, descriptive, anecdotal, biographical, statistical and poetical. This volume, the editors of which were Whitman's literary executors, Traubel, Richard Maurice Bucke, deceased, and Thomas B. Harned, had a restricted circulation, only one thousand numbered copies being published.

The universality of Traubel's fame as Walt Whitman's biographer is acknowledged even by those who

deny him his own right to the title of poet and prophet. Had Traubel not written a single line outside of his Whitman books he would still be accorded high rank in literature. One critic said that no complete life of Whitman can be written until Traubel had published his full record of "With Walt Whitman In Camden." The two men stood together, in life as in immortality. Their names will be as inseparable in history as they were in the sunset of Whitman's life. And yet; as great as Traubel's Whitman books are, and in spite of the claim of the critics that he has out-Boswelled Boswell, Traubel's own personal work deserves the higher consideration, and entitles him to a major place in the letters of his day and of the future. It should be remembered that Traubel wrote the biography, or, as one critic has called it, "Whitman's unconscious autobiography," more than a score of years ago. In recent years he merely copied some of his notes and put them into books.

Since Whitman's death Traubel wrote his own message to the world. Were Whitman alive he would probably be the first to accord Traubel a high rank as poet and prophet. An increasing number of persons are insisting that Traubel, the biographer, shall not usurp the place of Traubel, the poet. The Whitman books were only an incidental part of Traubel's work. Of course Whitman's personality had a tremendous influence upon Traubel's life. But we shall see that Traubel wrote out of his own soul and contact with life and affairs.

Whitman was to Traubel what the sun, the rain and the wind are to the earth. Traubel, the earth, absorbed all of Whitman, the elements; and out of Traubel's own soul

and brain grew the perfect fruit in the form of what a devoted and discriminative minority believe are among the most classical and democratic poems and short monographs in the language. Traubel never appraised his own work. When one told him he had written a good poem or essay he turned his searching, inquiring eyes upon him and asked: "Do you think so?" Like Whitman, Traubel did not make claims for himself. He was too busy making claims for the crowd. I have caught him in moments of deep reverie when he appeared to be doubtful if his writing was worth the effort, but he never doubted if his message was worth the effort of the writing. In the latter he never faltered; never pulled in the lines. "I go where my heart goes," he said. That is the best reason Traubel would give anyone for his writing and his movements. Traubel never got in Whitman's way. He never blocked the current of Walt's democratic and prophetic message. He declared *Leaves of Grass* was the greatest book — the Bible of the cosmos — and that Whitman was the most significant figure in literature. Whitman's spirit travelled a long way with Traubel's soul. Traubel had in a sense popularized Whitman. Also people have become more searching. Through all the long years of fierce struggle and adversity in his own career Traubel never let Whitman down. He was the constant and invisible force behind the Whitman propaganda, insisting always upon recognition for the Bard of Camden.

Each year, on May 31, the anniversary of the birth of Walt Whitman is celebrated by his friends and admirers who constitute the Walt Whitman Fellowship, International, of which Traubel was secretary.

The biggest event was always held in New York City at the Hotel Brevoort. Traubel quietly arranged for these gatherings each year. Speeches were made by prominent persons, and it was noteworthy that Traubel had the least to say. It was a celebration of Whitman. Traubel kept in the background busying himself with details that fall upon the chairman of an entertainment committee. Those Whitman gatherings were informal affairs, each celebrant having the privilege to say his say after the program. In the forum Traubel sometimes said a few words. In spite of his illness in the Spring of 1914 which prevented him from being present at the celebration, Traubel arranged the details from his sick bed. That was the first time the Whitmanites had occasion to realize the unostentatious power that radiated from the personality of the man, who for twenty-six consecutive years had made the celebrations possible. Traubel's absence proved the strength of his presence. I told Horace that Rose Karsner and myself had arranged with a mixed group of freethinkers at Arden, Delaware, a single-tax colony, for a Whitman anniversary celebration, during which we planted a sprig of lilac in memory of the poet. A few days later Traubel, who was convalescing, sent this letter to us:

Camden, June 2, 1914.

Dears, both of you. I'm ever so much better today. It seems to me it cant be long before I'm out again. You must had some beautiful hours together there Sunday celebrating together. Anne and I were here alone. We had roses in the room and said our prayers in silence.

Love, Horace.

Although Whitman was impartial towards revolutionary political and industrial propaganda he instinctively uttered the spirit of revolt—"the word en masse." A way back in those years Traubel persisted in drawing Whitman out on the labor question. Whitman was not always willing to be drawn out for at least two reasons. First, because he did not wish to plunge himself in controversial debate; second, because he admitted to Traubel that he "might brush up a bit" on the labor question. But Traubel was not satisfied. Traubel thought he knew what was wrong with the world. So did Whitman. But Traubel was convinced of the proper remedy, while Whitman was not and did not much concern himself about it. This situation prompted many spirited discussions between the old poet and the young revolutionist. The following from the third volume of "With Walt Whitman In Camden" is typical of such an occasion. Whitman had received an anarchist paper and put it aside for Traubel.

Whitman said: "I don't see what they are driving at—what the anarchists want: I do not understand what they want: I do not understand what the Henry George men want: nor do I trouble myself about it." "But you do trouble yourself about it," I said.

"What do you mean?" "Your book is full of anarchism and Henry George."

"He looked at me: 'You mean by implication? that I throw off sparks that way?' 'Yes.' 'Well, I suppose I do: I am sure, taken that way, that I might be convicted of a hundred philosophies.'"

"You say you don't know what the anarchists want, what the Henry George men want: are you sure

you don't?' He replied: 'If you ask me to tell you what their contention is I can't tell you.'

"Their contention is the same as yours. You remember what you told Pease here in this room?' 'Oh! he was the Socialist? that English fellow: a nice fellow, too. What did I tell Pease?' 'You said you didn't so much object to Socialism as to being talked to about it.' He laughed. 'Did I say that? Well why shouldn't I have said that: that's what I'm trying to say now.' 'But why don't you say it then? The way you talked I should judge your objection to Tucker and the other fellows to be general, wholesale.'

"No indeed. I would not have that implied: I honor them: I know they are probably working in their own way to produce what I working in my own way am trying to produce.' 'You ask: what do they want: what do they want? Let me ask you: what do you want?' 'Do you mean that as a question for me to answer?' 'Yes; I'd like to hear you answer it.' 'Suppose I would rather not answer it?' 'I would continue to want to hear you answer it anyhow.'" (Traubel notes that Whitman weighed the question a few moments before answering.)

Then: "I want the people: most of all the people: men, women, children: I want them to have what belongs to them: not a part of it, but all of it: I want anything done that will give the people their proper opportunities—their full life: anything, anything: whether by one means or another, I want the people to be given their due.' I said: 'That don't sound like a plea for millionaires.' 'I suppose not: the millionaires don't need anyone to plead for them: they are in possession.' I inquired: 'You want the people to



have all: how are they to get all?' 'Oh! there is the rub: how are they? Do you know? who knows? I wonder if anybody knows.'

"Well, Tucker thinks he knows: Henry George thinks he knows: Pease thought he knew.' 'But do they know?' W. cried: 'Every doctor knows, but do the doctors cure people?'

"I asked W.: 'How do you know these men don't know if you don't look into what they propose?' He smiled. 'Damn you! You're like a lawyer! That was a blow between the eyes.' I added: 'What they want — what Tucker wants, what George wants, what Pease wants — is exactly what you want: you want the people to own their product — to not make beautiful and useful things for the masters to enjoy. There must be a way out. Why isn't it as much your business as any other's to try to find what this way out is?' He answered at once: 'I suppose you are holding me up with good reason: I have no right to discourage the boys: they are doing their work — big work it is, too, I acknowledge: they are devoted—they sacrifice themselves to it: it needs to be done: the people must resume their inheritance.' 'Or assume it,' I said: 'They have never so far had it — therefore have not lost it.'

"You are cute: you see all around it — all around me, in fact: I acknowledge that I am wholly ignorant — that I might brush up a bit in this line and not be hurt by it.'" Traubel persisted in probing Whitman farther.

"Suppose millionaires were abolished — that millionairism became impossible, would you feel unhappy over it?' 'What *me?* God no! Aint that my pro-

gram?' 'That's what I'm trying to find out: I want to see if you do have a program.'"

A moment later Traubel shot straight out again.

"'I thought from what you said of Tucker and George that you were maybe a bit reactionary!' He fairly yelled at me: 'To hell with your reaction! to hell with it! I may be dodging your doctrines: I'm not dodging your purpose: I am with you all in what you aim for: solidarity, the supremacy of the people: all the people in possession of what belongs to all the people but has been stolen from them: I'm with you in that: but I can't follow you in all the intricate involvements, theories, through which you pursue your fierce agitations.'"

On another occasion Whitman told Traubel that he "felt almost sure Socialism is the next thing coming."

Then later on he said: "Horace you'll be in the thick of the fight after I'm gone: my days are few: but you have years ahead—years of vicissitude—of active agitation: you are one of the rebels: you will have to take your part in the fight. God bless you whatever you do! I know that what you do for yourself, for others, in those days you'll also do for me. God bless you!"

How prophetic was Whitman! How well he understood Traubel! He knew the young man of hot head and fiery heart would some day be in the thick of the social war for political and industrial peace. He was willing to trust Traubel to do and say for him what Traubel would do and say for others. I have quoted from the Whitman and Traubel talks as recorded in the latter's books to show how clearly Traubel understood the labor question away back in those years when to be a Socialist was tantamount to self-inflicted ostra-

cism. I have said that Whitman exercised a tremendous influence over Traubel. I am now willing to say that Traubel also exercised an influence over Whitman. I have heard persons ask: "What would Traubel have been without Whitman?" We could, in good taste, ask: "What would Whitman have been without Traubel?"

Following is one of Traubel's poems in memory of his days with Walt:

### O MY DEAD COMRADE.

FOR W. W.

O my dead comrade—my great dead!  
 I sat by your bedside—it was the close of day—  
 I heard the drip of the rain on the roof of the house:  
 The light shadowed—departing, departing—  
 You also departing, departing—  
 You and the light, companions in life, now, too, companions  
     in death,  
 Retiring to the shadow, carrying elsewhere the benediction of  
     your sunbeams.  
 I sat by your bedside, I held your hand:  
 Once you opened your eyes: O look of recognition! O look  
     of bestowal!  
 From you to me then passed the commission of the future,  
 From you to me that minute, from your veins to mine,  
 Out of the flood of passage, as you slipped away with the  
     tide,  
 From your hand that touched mine, from your soul that  
     touched mine, near, O so near—  
 Filling the heavens with stars—  
 Entered, shone upon and out of me, the power of the spring,  
     the seed of the rose and the wheat,  
 As of father to son, as of brother to brother, as of god to  
     god!  
 O my great dead!

You had not gone, you had stayed—in my heart, in my  
veins,  
Reaching through me, through others through me, through  
all at last, our brothers,  
A hand to the future.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNISM

THE logical sequence of economic reasoning is the desire to emancipate the workman by rewarding him for his honest labor with honest pay. It is the desire to give to the workman the full product of his toil, and to also give to the purchaser the full product of his investment. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the development of the machine and the degradation of the mechanic. Thomas Carlyle suspected the trend of industry but he did not fathom its potential meaning. John Ruskin saw the triangular misunderstanding between the workman, the manufacturer and the consumer when he said:

"The false, unnatural, and destructive system is when the bad workman is allowed to offer his work at half price, and either take the place of the good, or force him by his competition to work for an inadequate sum."

William Morris sensed the economic problems and he adopted a philosophy through which he thought they might be solved. Walt Whitman understood that the workman and his work must find common ground if society was to be benefited and the vision of man enlarged. He was the champion of the toiler and he was tolerant of any organization or program through which the laborer sought to dignify his labor. But

Traubel was more definite, more positive than any of these thinkers and doers. He experimented.

From 1903 to 1907 he was associated with Hawley McLanahan and the late Will Price, Philadelphia architects, in publishing *The Artsman*, "a sort of parish record," as they called it, of Rose Valley, a crafts experiment. McLanahan gives us the purpose of this movement launched on the outskirts of Philadelphia. He says:

"Rose Valley is not an impractical or visionary undertaking but a concrete business proposition. The Rose Valley Association was chartered in July, 1901, under Pennsylvania state laws, for the purpose of encouraging the manufacture of such articles involving artistic handicraft as are used in the finishing, decorating and furnishing of houses. In entering upon this work Rose Valley unites with various other societies throughout the world in a general protest against the often vulgar product of the modern machine and against the consequent degradation and ruin of the craftsman. The minute division of labor that has come about in our almost automatic industry seems indeed not only to destroy the craftsman but to threaten the man.

"Rose Valley is to do what it can to break down the artificial distinction made in modern society between the work of the hand and the work of the brain. Rose Valley is convinced that manual labor must be restored to its rightful place of priority and honor." Here was the ideal struggling for expression.

"The site taken up comprises about eighty acres of land once largely occupied with spacious stone mills and picturesque tenant houses." The mill walls were to be utilized in the development of the shops. The

former tenant houses were remodeled into comfortable homes, supplied with necessary modern appointments. A small garden was provided for each house, offering opportunity for flower and vegetable cultivation. A creek running through the settlement afforded diversion for those who cared for boating and bathing.

"The workman in the Rose Valley Shop," wrote McLanahan, "looks out upon green trees, distant fields and flowing streams—a more inspiring scene, truly, than brick walls and chimney tops." William Morris said "those who are to make beautiful things must live in a beautiful place." Rose Valley aimed to practise this.

"It is absurd", McLanahan continued, "to expect men who spend eight hours each day in an uncomfortable factory, and sixteen hours in equally uncomfortable streets and homes, to produce the sort of work which under the proper auspices the same brains and the same hands would be sure to evoke. The great distances between the scattered homes of the city workmen makes mutual life which comes easily at Rose Valley impossible."

Will Price, one of the founders, asks: "Is Rose Valley worth while? Is anything worth while except a blind acceptance of customary conditions and a dumb hope that somehow through evolution or through some agency external to man a better condition will come? It is at least worth while to consider what all our painful struggle is about and why we carry it on. All men at some future time and in some faint degree have dreams of a golden age, and a hope so universal must always foreshadow some new epoch."

In the same number of *The Artsman*, October, 1903, from which the foregoing quotations are taken, Trau-

bel wrote: "Rose Valley is a cross between economic revolution and the stock exchange. Rose Valley is not shutting one door and opening another. Rose Valley connects in the open with industrial fact. It is not a break. It is an evolution. . . . Rose Valley is not altogether a dream or wholly an achievement. It is an experiment. It is also an act of faith. It is not willing to say what it will do. It is only willing to say what it is trying to do. Rose Valley pays a first tribute to labor. Labor is the social base. Our modern world had quarreled with this disposition of values. And many who do not share its quarrel still shrink from making a concession to labor. Rose Valley knows and acknowledges the situation. . . . Rose Valley is not under any illusions. It does not think it is doing singlehanded a work which is at last winning intercontinental allies. It is one figure in a movement much more portentous than any individual instance of devotion could shape or weigh. . . . The carver carving wood is at work scripting the daily life of man. To make the joint of a chair what it should be is an act as holy as hymning an abstract creed. Rose Valley does not say any contradicting formula is wholly wrong. It does not assume that its formula is wholly right. It is undertaking to prove to itself first of all that work may be made holy through the freedom of its workman. Rose Valley may fail. But its faith cannot fail. Its temporal implements may prove too weak. The wisdom or the backbone of its co-operative force may break in the test. But the experiment is worth putting to the proof. . . . The Rose Valley shops are temples. Here men pray in their work. Here men practice fellowship in their work.



The shops have only one creed. That creed is good work. There is only one apostasy at Rose Valley. That apostasy is bad work. . . . Rose Valley would make every tool of its carver, every letter of its font of type, contribute something to the sum total of practical piety. I can see God in the honest joint of a chair. I can see God woven in tapestries and beaten in brasses and bound in the covers of books. You have taken the ideal away from the commonplace and refuged it on the side of special acts and hours. Rose Valley sees the ideal in its shops, in every day service, arbitrating the differences of work. Rose Valley has not withdrawn from the world. It is in the world. It is to fight its battle on the field upon which it finds a challenge. It is not an ideal. It is a step towards an ideal. It is not standing in the way of any agent of social evolution. It is co-operating with agents. . . . Why should not the man and the machine sit down and reason together? We have got the man and the machine at odds. Instead of asking questions of each other they are accusing each other. . . . The machine-made man is against the race. The man-made machine is for the race. Ten thousand machine successes do not together make one success. The only successes that guarantee and perpetuate success are human successes. . . . The machine can make a machine. It cannot make a man. It can produce miracles. But the one miracle that is worth while comes in the old way. No man must be against the machine. But every man must take care that the machine is not against man. The machine that defers to man should be given right of way. But the philosophy under

whose dictum man must defer to the machine should be refused all parole."

I have quoted Traubel at length to show how elemental and far reaching were his meanings. "Shops are temples!" "Men pray in their work!" "I can see God in the honest joint of a chair!" These are appeals to equity, justice and honesty. The failure of Rose Valley does not prove the fallacy of its foundation. The cloud does not prove the deception of the sun. The withered sprout does not prove the corruption of the oak. Traubel and his associates gave to the world something it was not ready to receive. Rose Valley was the premature child of its economic mother. It was not a step backward into industrial competition, but rather a leap forward into the social commune. Rose Valley was the social spirit incorporated into economic fact. It was the harbinger of the co-operative commonwealth heralding its message of freedom in the camp of industrial slavery. It was the expression of "hope that some men, released from the deadening influences of monotonous unthinking toil, may see such possibilities in life as will make them put their shoulders to the wheel and strive to lift society out of the rut of accustomed thought or habit."

## CHAPTER VIII

### COMRADE AND LOVER

**I** FEEL a certain timorousness in attempting to sketch the daily life of Horace Traubel as he lived it in those full and flowing years prior to his first illness in the Spring of 1914. All who knew Traubel were bound to reckon with him. He was a tremendous personal force and his magnetic personality had influence upon all who came into contact with him.

The question as to whether persons received more inspiration from Traubel personally, than they did from his writings, or vice versa, must pass on unanswered. No two persons would likely give an identical analysis of the same person or his utterances.

There are many persons, who, in their quest for interesting people look for them in the gilded places, the brilliant parlors, the banquet halls, the rendezvous of intellectuals and the haunts and habitats of scholars and literary folk. Traubel was never to be found in such places. He was among the crowds; among the untitled and untutored mob; in the common restaurants; in the dingy halls where some rich message was being expounded; maybe he was in the crowd standing in front of a baseball score board in Philadelphia on most any scorching afternoon; or maybe he was in the bleachers at the ball game, shouting exultantly with the excited "fans."

Before 1914, in the small hours of the morning, when the pulse of the world was lowest, when the departing moon was making its adieu to the coming sun, when the revelers and strayers abandoned conventional restraint in the nocturnal freeground of the spirit, one might have seen Traubel, a green bag under his arm, homeward bound after his day's work was done, trudging down Chestnut street to the Camden ferry boat, stopping here and there to greet a tired policeman, or an alert newsboy, or speaking to some hapless girl of the streets, a word of kindness. No matter whether he was in New York, Montreal, Boston, or at home in Philadelphia, Traubel mixed with the crowds. "I would rather miss the stars and flowing river; I would rather miss anything else than one of them," he said, "for it is not the flame that lights the little fires, it is the little fires that make the flame." On the ferry boat in that witching hour he usually met one or two newspaper men. In the few minutes that it took the boat to cross the river these men had approved or criticised and arrived at conclusions on the current news happenings of the day several hours before the world had washed its face.

When Traubel reached home in those days of his physical vigor he invariably critically read a book until five or six o'clock. Then he went to bed. He would rise again by ten o'clock, sleeping five hours at the most. At noon, he crossed the river, walked up Chestnut street, dropping a cheery word to his numerous acquaintances, not excluding an old apple woman and "Blind Al," who kept a fruit and paper stand at Independence Square for twenty-five years. It was usually one o'clock before he reached his study and

printing shop in the garret of a four story office building at 1631 Chestnut street, situated in the business heart of the Quaker City. At the door was Traubel's ample wooden mail box. It was true when he sang:

The world leaves its mail at my door: every morning and all day leaves its mail:

Into the little box there a few inches by a few inches pours the flood of its interchange:

Like seas crowded into a cup, like stars packed into a case, like the whole concentrated into a fragment:

Every morning and all day streams into that little reservoir the treasure of the earth:

From here and everywhere: from lands I know and lands I don't know: brings its sacred tribute:

The mails: letters of love and hate: letters of trade and revolution: brings it all.

Traubel wrote each day a score of letters by his own hand. A friend in distress would receive a line or two of cheer. Like a faithful doctor watching over his patients, Traubel sent these daily missives out from his heart to people he knew and to those he had never seen. To little children would come his notes of endearment and picture postal cards. Following is a note he wrote on his birthday to our little baby girl, Walta, who was then scarcely a month old:

New York, December 19, 1914.

Dear Walta, old lady.

I'm fifty-six years young today. And you're no years old today. Across all discrepancies of age and experience I pass myself to you and you pass yourself to me. Who can penetrate the mystery which has brought you here for me or kept me here for you?

Horace Traubel.

I choose at random one of Traubel's typical letters from a batch :

New York, Dec. 8, 1913.

I've been sort of listening for good news from you today. I came away on this mission with no heart in me for it. My long fight against adversities in this damned money tussle has made me hate the system worse than ever. Some of the children at some future time will be born into a world in which some of the dreams of some of the fools may be fulfilled.

Love, Dave.

Horace.

Frequently Traubel passed letters he had received on to other friends to read. Thus, an acquaintanceship was often established between persons who had never met face to face. In this way many friendships were made.

Radical newspapers and magazines by the hundreds came to Traubel's office and not one was thrown away until he had carefully scanned it for matter he either wanted to keep for reference or to send to his friends. Traubel devoted one or two hours each day in looking over these exchanges and the half dozen newspapers he purchased. Like a trained editor, he glanced at column after column, clipping here, penciling there. To his friend who worked in a bank Traubel would send clippings and articles on banking and finance. To his friend on the stage would go bits about the drama and theatrical folk. His friend contemplating motherhood would receive clippings on the care children should have. In other words, he was literally a bureau of voluntary information.

No one could meet Traubel without immediately being conscious of his unusual and powerful personality. His appearance alone instantly attracted all who came in contact with him. His stature was short and thick, "the full throat, the noble, splendidly shaped head, the intensely alive mobile face with its large, eager, blue eyes, and lips determined and impetuous under the short moustache, the crowning glory of thick, loosely tossed white hair, all go to make up an individuality which is at once that of a radiant boy and of a supreme seer," wrote Mildred Bain in her sketch of him.\* He wore the simplest clothes, and used to go without an overcoat even in the coldest Canadian weather. His hat was soft, grey felt which he folded up and stuck into his pocket. The inevitable flowing tie, usually a black one, was adjusted carelessly to an exceedingly low collar.

Traubel's intense magnetism, his spontaneity of utterance, his untiring conversational and physical vigor left an indelible impression upon all who met him. Doubtless there were many persons, who, while in Traubel's presence, were conscious of him as a writer. But his own demeanor was not accountable for that impression. The sincerity of his friendship and his freedom-loving disposition were more readily discerned.

Traubel's work shop consisted of two rooms, in the garret of 1631 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia. In one there were cases of type from which he not infrequently set up the pages of *The Conservator* when he was too poor to employ a compositor. Then there were

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\* "Horace Traubel," by Mildred Bain, page 14. A. & C. Boni, 1913.

huge, dust covered piles and boxes of back numbers of his publication, while stacks of faded newspapers and magazines, together with an accumulation of miscellaneous printed matter were strewn over the floor. But it was in the front room, his "shop," as he called it, where the chief interest lay. Numerous boxes, improvised book cases, covered three walls and contained thousands of books on every subject under the sun. Hundreds of these were old prints which any modern collector would consider a gold mine, while hundreds of others were autographed copies. Such spaces of the walls that were not hidden by shelves of books were covered with old portraits, original paintings, drawings and cartoons, and photographs of authors, poets, friends and children. On a dusty couch and equally \* dusty chairs were Traubel's hats and umbrellas, maybe a garment or two, and more books and newspapers and magazines. In the center of the floor stood a flat desk groaning under the weight of long paste-board boxes of letters from all sorts and conditions of men. There were letters written between Walt Whitman and Tennyson; from Brand Whitlock and William Jennings Bryan, and from such critics as Edmund Clarence Stedman, John Addington Symonds, Edward Dowden and William Michael Rossetti. There were others from John Burroughs, Joaquin Miller, Jack London, Julia Marlowe, and hundreds of others; from artists and artisans; from the famous and the obscure; from the ambitious and the disconsolate.

On the same desk and packed away in drawers were packages of manuscripts, many of which were those of Walt Whitman; others were from latter day celebrities known in every nook and corner of the world, while still others were from struggling scribes



who hoped, and perhaps succeeded in having their effusions printed in *The Conservator*. Lined up all about this desk were more boxes containing clippings and cartoons, an accumulation of thirty years. In another corner by the window was Traubel's work desk. Such a deluge of matter! Every pigeon hole and drawer ached with its compact treasure. Traubel would often complain of the condition of his studio. When visitors came he would apologetically clean off a chair, place its load onto another, and explain that he intended to clean house, a promise he had no intention of fulfilling. Fastidious women especially, were horrified at the apparent carelessness of Traubel's quarters.

New York had its Bohemiana in Pfaff's where free-thinkers and writers gathered, but Philadelphia, no less, had its 1840 Market Street, where college professors, newspaper men, professional singers and tutors, and business men who were rigid in trade but free in spirit, gathered at Tom Mills' (the waiter), table to ostensibly eat their meals, but to especially tear the world into shreds and then place it safely back upon its axis after vigorous and often white-heated discussions. Unconsciously, Traubel's personality was the motor that drove the current of free expression through the minds of these men and women. At a casual glance there was nothing unusual about the restaurant on Market street near Nineteenth, for it had the exterior and interior appearance of most any modern cafe. But at a table to one side and in the center of a long row there were eight, ten or twelve men and women crowded about it during the luncheon and dinner hours.

Other patrons coming to and fro would stop and

wonder what sort of a group it was whose voices and repeated thumpings on the table were heard above the clatter of dishes and the noise of other voices giving orders to the cook. These diners and debaters ran up and down the scale of thought with such bewildering rapidity that Tom stood first on one foot and then on the other vainly attempting to wedge a word through the intellectual or mediocre discussion. Baseball, pugilism, Christian Science anarchism, vaccination and vivisection, literature, drama, art, labor and capital, prohibition and women's suffrage were approved and disapproved in this war and peace of words. When a person had sat through one of these sessions, which often lasted long after the cook had gone home, he might very fairly believe he had been listening to living encyclopedias whose statistics and data were challenged with almost sacrilegious impunity. This group, whose numbers fluctuated with the change of residence, was known as the Pepper Pot Club, the title having been derived from one of the delectable dishes. When Traubel was absent from these spontaneous sessions they were conducted quite calmly. That does not mean he did all the talking, but the hub was missing from the wheel.

During the year 1913, when my wife and I lived a block or so from Traubel's studio, he frequently came to our rooms in the evening. Sometimes he came alone, while on numerous occasions he was accompanied by one or two of our mutual friends. These were evenings never to be forgotten. Into the little room the three of us, maybe four or five, discussed or were silent together. Often Traubel corrected proofs. Sometimes he read, and not infrequently he

took little "cat naps." Within those four walls free spirits conspired to set the world at peace. We were materially a part of, yet spiritually removed from the struggles of the earth as our dreams soared to the heavens and kissed the stars. Our rooms might well have been termed a sort of headquarters for a small group of radicals who dropped in and out at their own pleasure. Frequently Traubel came for supper, and on such occasions he would assist in making ready for the meal and help in clearing away the debris. He was at ease with unostentatious people, and was democratic in manner and thought to an uncommon degree.

In *The Conservator* for November, 1913 appeared Traubel's poem entitled "My Dear Comrades Live Just Round The Corner," in which he made memorable those inspiring evenings we spent together. The following is the first stanza:

My dear comrades live just round the corner:  
I go to them in the evenings: we sit under the light and talk:  
Sometimes little is said: a word of this or that: only silence  
can sometimes tell what we feel:  
The three of us: the man my comrade, dear to me: the  
woman my comrade, dear to me:  
The simple man, whose common speech gets closer to me  
than the songs of David:  
The simple woman, whose wholesome quiet is sweeter to me  
than the odor of the rose:  
The three of us: one in three: three in one: coming without  
let, going without hindrance:  
They just round the corner from me: I just round the  
corner from them: so near: always within call:  
Understanding each other well: not needing to have each  
other explained:  
Taking the fair and good for granted when things look the  
other way: always doing that:

Knowing for now and all the simple fact: knowing that  
heaven is mine any time I reach for it: and theirs:  
In this war of profits living this peace of service: they with  
me: I with them:  
When the clouds are so thick they hide everything not hiding  
that: not hiding them from me or me from them:  
My comrade girl, darling of miles and hours: and him, her  
comrade lover, with whom I share this joy:  
Nearer to me than the skin on my bones: both of them: as  
near to me as the dreams of my soul:  
Taking me to themselves as theirs: they, demanding me: tak-  
ing them to myself as mine: I, demanding them:  
In the evenings under the light, round the corner from  
where I live: they with me:  
Seeing so much: saying so little: bringing the world into the  
little room to sit with us:  
Into the every day yes and no of our lips and hearts flashing  
immortal time: a man and a woman and their com-  
rade:  
My dear comrades live just round the corner.

Traubel was so easily pleased. He was grateful for the smallest favor and the slightest recognition. A little gift of this or that — some little token as an expression of a big love filled him with profound appreciation. In a copy of Chants Communal which he presented to Rose Karsner, Traubel wrote this inscription on the fly leaf:

Philada.

Nov. 4, 1913.

Dear Rose,

If you're half as willing to receive this book from me as I am to give it to you you'll be doing me such honor as I'll not readily forget. I like to look back upon the days and nights you and Dave and I have spent together in this room and up where you live. You have sort of provided me with an extra home

whose four walls are sacred to me. Or, rather, with an extra home without dimensions whose witness is the love you have so fully poured out in my behalf. I say this from my heart and I want you to realize that it stands for much more than could ever be put into words.

Horace Traubel.

For a similar avowal of his affection I turn to the fly leaf in the third volume of *With Walt Whitman In Camden*:

April, 1914.

This is a sort of workman's copy of my book for Rose and Dave Karsner whose lives have soundly become part of my life and whose joys and sorrows are therefore mine: for Rose and Dave my darling comrades towards whom my heart always reaches in ardent love.

Horace Traubel.

A few days after the last mentioned book came we received a note from Traubel, penned by his daughter, telling us that he got back to Philadelphia from Montreal "all broken up" and was "torn with pain from head to foot." He contracted a severe cold in Montreal which developed in Boston and New York, reached its climax in Philadelphia and forced him to go to bed in Camden with a complicated illness that was so grave as to threaten his life on two occasions during the five weeks of his confinement. This was the first time in his life of robust and vigorous health that he was obliged to lay off for sickness. I visited him frequently, both when he was sick to extremes

and while he was convalescing, and at no time did he utter a complaining or despondent word. He was always "getting along nicely" and expecting to be "out in a few days." When he was better I asked him if he realized how close a call he had and he replied that "the doctors made a bigger fuss than was necessary." But I feel sure that Traubel was deeply concerned about his condition during the critical stages of his illness, and I am equally certain that his supreme optimism and indomitable will together with the constant care given him by his wife were potent factors toward his recovery. A day or two after he got out of bed and was able to be propped up on a chair by a window Traubel wrote a poem. I happened in to see him a few days later. He was correcting the proof which he handed to me to read, saying, "See if that sounds like a sick man's poem." Following is the first stanza:

I feel like a youngster again every morning:

Everything begins again: all is new once more: I start re-  
juvenated:

Whatever may have happened the day before, this happens  
to take its place:

This renewal of life: this fresh perfume of the first dawn:  
The stale yesterdays are all repealed: the old things are all  
young: that which was dead is alive:

The tired world is rested: the sick world is well: the cruel  
world is kind:

Out of space and time the stars are reborn: out of the vast  
darkness the sun is relit:

I who was so many years near death am so many more years  
near life:

Here I am at the threshold: here I am helping myself freely  
to youth and faith:

\*It's all my own for me to do with as I please: here I can take all I need:

At the edge of discovery: on the rim of the unseen: to fill myself with treasure:

That's how it comes to me every morning when I wake up:  
I feel like a youngster again every morning.

Mrs. Lillian Wetstein Mendelssohn, one of Traubel's many friends in Montreal, wrote a letter in October, 1913 to Miss Esther Mendel, a friend, who was at the time, touring the country with the Sothern-Marlowe Company in Shakesperian plays. The following extract from Mrs. Mendelssohn's letter, which was never intended for the printer, shows how profound an impression Traubel made upon those who met him, and how naturally this impression was conveyed to others:

" . . . . While we are speaking of temperaments—as to Horace Traubel. I will tell you just what I think of him. From a literary standpoint I can say without the least exaggeration and without being over enthused, that he is an intellectual giant. A man with a breadth of vision that is glorious, with the heart of the poet, and yet with the greatest mental balance; a most retentive mind and an eye that sees below the surface of everything right down to the fundamentals. He is daring, courageous.

"Then just as a man—well it is hard to express one's feelings. He is a man in whom one could place the most implicit trust. I would stake everything on his absolute sincerity. He has a singularly full nature, a nature that feels the need of loving, not one person, but many. But he is also like a child in his craving for love. He is very sensitive and he likes to have

his own way, but as his own way is usually the best way I don't blame him. Just think, Esther! If any one of us should die why it would be only our own people and a few, a very few immediate friends who would feel any sense of loss; but when the time comes for him to cross the bar! Think what it will mean to a vast number of people. Why a part of their very lives will be gone—a part of themselves, almost."

Men of Traubel's type always attract a variety of radicals and faddists. Traubel expressed a literal truth when he said: "Every time an eccentric comes along the street he aims straight for me and asks: How are you comrade?" He was unusual because so many others are usual. He never claimed a patent on anything he said or did; in fact, he did not claim anything for himself that he would not claim for the humblest man. The ever recurrent wrangles of party and creed paled before Traubel's stout doctrine for all humanity. To him humanity was the most significant work in the language. He vehemently denied there were any foreigners except those who alienated themselves from world ideals, world loves, world truths. Traubel's attitude toward life was not a superficial pose. He said: "I am a man and you are a man. Let us greet one another gladly." He was a writer because he could not help writing. He was a poet not because he wrote poems, but because he attempted to live a poetic life. His life was surcharged with the fire of idealism that consumed the bad and conserved the good. If he had not been a writer he would probably have been an artist or an agitator. Traubel claimed there was in each of us a divinity so much akin to God that we were impelled to express the



yearnings of our souls. Natural, useful living expresses itself in worthy deed. Traubel once wrote:

"Some people imagine that a purpose and a mission are the same thing. But that is a mistake. A man with a purpose is a pilgrim. A man with a mission is a pirate. Men with missions beat you down with a club. What are your petty affairs to a man with a mission? Get off the road. Step aside. See that he getes accomplished. It doesn't matter about you. Whether you are fulfilled or not. But the man with the mission. He must be confirmed. Postpone everything for him. Die for him to live. Starve for him to eat. The man who makes my shoes has as much a mission as the man who writes my books. Stop the printing presses. Dry up the inkwells. Make way for the shoemaker. Why not?"

Traubel detested literary show. Although he was known in literary circles in New York and Boston he did not court favor of editors or writers. In his days of health when he visited either of these cities he would hunt up a little group of radicals and revolutionists who were practically unknown outside of their own circle of acquaintances. He would go with them to the unpretentious restaurants and there they exchanged stories, discussed a strike or a book and waxed eloquent on subjects of fundamental import. He shrank from all human superficiality. He would engage one in conversation about matters in which he knew his visitor was interested. He sought to learn another's point of view, but never hesitated to assert his own. His keen wit and incisive satire were frequently construed as an affront when none was intended. Very often he would remain quiet during the

entire length of a discussion. Then, all of a sudden he would burst out with approval or disapproval of what was said. Many times he was silently irritated or demonstratively intolerant when a slurring remark was made against a vital principle. He was easily ruffled when opposed in verbal combat without being personally angry at his opponent. Traubel could never have been a public figure in the sense of holding an office. He was too frank, too candid, too certain of his own ground to yield one iota to a compromising point of view. He made a few speeches to little revolutionary groups, but aside from these he rarely appeared on public platforms. He felt comfortable in an audience, and more comfortable in a gallery. He was passionately fond of music, and for a score of years he occupied the same seat in the top gallery of the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, where symphony concerts were held every Saturday evening during the musical season. Traubel got much of his deepest inspiration from these symphonies:

While the orchestra plays you, mighty symphony,  
While the masters and critics are debating what you mean,  
I stand here and there listening and I say nothing.

Traubel had an utter disregard for money. Although he never had much at one time, he spent liberally of what he had. When in a small party of friends he was usually the first to offer to pay for the simple pleasures in the form of a moving picture show, or a "treat" to ice cream, or a trolley ride. He did not regard these little outlays as an expense, but rather as an investment in good fellowship. He was uncomfortable when in debt, and he contracted no

personal obligations other than those for the bare necessities of life.

It was both humorous and pathetic to watch him open a letter containing some small sum from one of his many Conservator debtors or from a new subscriber. He was thoroughly business-like in immediately crediting the sum to the debtor's subscription, but his disregard for money and business methods was manifested by the fact that he frequently slipped the cash or check back into the envelope, and carried it for days in his pocket, only to finally place the letter in a packet with others, forgetting its contents. A case in point was when he once showed Rose and me an old letter from Joaquin Miller, "the poet of the Sierras." The envelope was brown with age and the ink had turned a reddish hue. As we opened the missive a dollar bill dropped to the floor. Traubel was surprised, but he reverently placed the money back into the envelope and tucked it away again. He has shown me several old checks for substantial sums that had become devoid of value because of just such practises. I have known him to skip meals because of lack of ready cash and his reluctance to impose upon his credit which was always extended to him by tradesmen.

After all has been said and written about Horace Traubel as a writer, as a critic and as a poet, he still stands out preeminently as a man, as a friend.

Eugene V. Debs once commented about Traubel, saying: "Horace Traubel has the distinctest personality of any man of letters now before the American people. He can be likened to no other author or writer, living or dead. Although a loyal disciple and

devotee of Walt Whitman, from whom he undoubtedly caught his earliest and deepest inspiration, he goes far beyond his revered master. He not only brings the old Prophet of Democracy up to date but he traverses untrodden fields and explores new realms in quest of truth that is to light up the heavens of humanity, banish darkness from the face of the earth, and set free the countless captive children of men.

"Horace Traubel has the clear vision of a prophet, the analytical mind of a philosopher, the daring imagination of a poet, the heroic soul of a martyr, and the unpolluted heart of a child. In his fearless search for truth and his passionate demand for justice there is nothing too sacred for this brilliant iconoclast to attack and nothing too humble for him to love. In him the most powerful and popular of earth's rulers have an implacable foe and the weakest and most despised an uncompromising friend.

"The world may starve him to death but it will never bribe him into prostitution; it may destroy his body but it can never pollute his soul, and long after he has left his trail of light up the heights, the name of Horace Traubel will shine with all the lustre of a star."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WRITER

**T**RAUBEL was not always genial and tolerant. Sometimes he was brutal and arrogant. Brutal in defending a just cause, and arrogant in his belief of the justice of the cause. The Jew in Traubel was emotional and idealistic, while the German in him was thorough and practical. These racial elements in him were harmoniously welded in the American. This grows upon the reader more and more as he follows *Optimos* and *Chants Communal*, both of which express the idealism of all races. Traubel's poems are the challenges of centuries of men from the farthest corners of the earth creeping out from the crevices, the caves, the holes, the horrible streets of civilized cities, climbing upward and on towards the sunlight of democracy.

They are poems of economic revolt electrified with spiritual idealism that defy the masters of property, glorify the creators of useful and beautiful things, and banish forever the multifarious superstitions and dogmas that engulf the souls and benumb the minds of men. As one reads Traubel he begins to see the social world for which Traubel plead; a world of human rights above property rights; a world in which master and slave merge in the common need of mutual service; a world in which pauper and prince are welded in the man; a world in which love and tolerance are

the first requisites of human happiness. Traubel sought to be the poet of the crowd, the mob, the "fussy, fuming populace of the pavements." He pointed the way to culture, led the way to social happiness, and inspired, rather than taught, that self abnegation was rewarded by richness of the soul. The weak and the oppressed found voice in his song. The socially disinherited would come into their social inheritance through the logic and strength of his doctrine.

No writer ever lived who was more careful to keep inviolate the integrity of his soul than Traubel. He refused time and again to accept literary sinecures and positions of power, knowing that to do so might dim the light of his intellect and quench the fires of his ideals. The following is an extract from a Collect in *The Conservator*, March, 1915, marking the paper's age by a quarter of a century:

"I've never written for victory. That's why I could never be conscious of defeat. I've done it all because I had to do it. Because something I could not defy made its unceasing demands on me. If you ask me why I've been a fool I can only say because I had to. I was for people. There's where they told me I was wrong. I was wild enough to say I could see only people. I was a democrat. But my democracy included that which excluded it. My democracy was not an affair of a constitution or a creed but an affair of conduct. I didn't condone the saving remnants. I acquiesced in the mob. But that was what overthrew me. You'll never get anywhere: that's what they asserted. I was to stay as I had been obscure. I couldn't be forgotten because I was never remembered.

Do you realize what this shows? I was bankrupt. My capital was all gone. I was an outcast. Little as I was as a man I became big as an offender. I never dispute the man who disproves me. I do caution the man who endorses me. I was guilty of the final idiocy. I stood for people in the midst of property. I stood for love in the midst of law. I stood for the commune in the midst of profit. I stood for the meanest man in the midst of the noblest books. It never occurred to me to put anything ahead of folks. When I said everybody nobody was left out. My course was so simple, so crude, so thorough, so wholesale, so without end or beginning or apology that it was laughed at as the froth of a contemptible emotion. I've taken my place with the crowd. I've met the sayers of democracy. But I want to meet the democrat. My heart is the general heart. I have no desires that would separate me from all the rest. Let me be as commonplace as the dust. After twenty-five years of life and death I still say life is not death and death is inevitably life. I'm just a blind, deaf and dumb democrat. I'm a democrat in spite of all undeniable logic and in the face of every axiom of aristocracy. I want the people on any terms. I'd rather have all the people for bad than just a few saints for good. I like the feel of the people."

When *Chants Communal* appeared in 1904 from Small, Maynard & Co., Boston, few persons comprehended the profound meaning and social significance of Traubel's message. The book is full of questions and challenges addressed to the economic masters, exploiters, lords of money and men. Nearly all the pieces which are in prose were first contributed

to the New York Worker, a Socialist weekly out of which grew the New York Daily Call. These pieces are like a single hymn on equality and comradeship. The fundamental motive of Chants Communal is the same as that of Leaves of Grass. In America the book was coolly received. It got but scant notice from critics. But in Germany the book met with an almost instantaneous response. A noble translation by O. E. Lessing appeared in Germany from the house of R. Piper & Company, Munich, in 1907. The February, 1913, issue of Die Lese, Stuttgart, Germany, was a Traubel issue. It contained Lessing's tribute and Arthur Holitscher's estimate of Traubel and his work, together with three full pages of Lessing's German reprint of Chants Communal. Several of Traubel's writings in The Conservator have been translated into the French by Leon Bazalgette, translator and biographer of Walt Whitman. He has many friends and followers in England. In Japan, too, he is known and has been translated there. Thus it seems, the old irony repeats itself. It was Europe who first revealed to America her Poe, Emerson, Whistler, Whitman, MacDowell and Henry James. And we may fairly depend upon Europe to tell us who is Horace Traubel. Albert and Charles Boni, New York, brought out a second edition of Chants Communal in paper cover. But the fact remains that literary America has not yet recognized Traubel.

When Optimos appeared in 1910, (published by B. W. Huebsch) the American press, with but few exceptions, either mocked it or threw it aside as an imitation of Leaves of Grass.

Optimos and Leaves of Grass are identical in this



respect: they are the bibles of labor. Does not nature repeat itself in every recurrent spring? Shall we deny the sun today because it shone yesterday? Is not a grain of sand on the banks of the Mississippi as mysterious as a grain on the banks of the Nile? Immitation! Is not everything we see in man and wrought by him a replica and repetition of what was before? Whitman himself said he was not the first or the last of his race. In his poem, "Poets To Come," Whitman says:

Poets to come: orators, singers, musicians to come!  
Not today is to justify me and answer what I am for,  
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater  
than before known,  
Arouse! for you must justify me.  
I myself but write one or two indicative words for the  
future,  
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in  
the darkness.  
I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping  
turns a casual look upon you and then averts his face,  
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,  
Expecting the main things from you.

The long shadow of Whitman's figure has cast itself upon Traubel only in the eyes of his critics. But those who have traced the life of Traubel, studied his work, and analyzed his methods feel that his genius would have manifested itself in spite of, rather than because of Whitman's influence. Alfred Kreymborg, in a notable figure article on "Traubel, American," New York Morning Telegraph, May 31, 1914, emphasized this point when he said: "Beethoven supplemented Bach and Mozart. He is none the less Beethoven. Wagner

supplemented Gluck and Richard Strauss, Wagner. They are none the less Wagner and Strauss."

Traubel has also supplemented Whitman but he is none the less Traubel, who, in his quest for truth and justice traversed untrodden fields and explored new realms not ventured by Whitman. Traubel was one of Whitman's supreme biographers, but he has gone far beyond that biography. He gave us a biography of Whitman that is immortal, but he has also given us something vastly more valuable — an autobiography of himself in Chants Communal and Optimos and through his Conservator.

The fundamental difference between Whitman and Traubel lies in the fact that you have to go to Whitman, while Traubel comes to you. Traubel, like Whitman, was an eternal optimist. But their optimism was radically different. Whitman believed in and brooded over the eventual good. Traubel believed in and was happy over the present good. Traubel was a staunch advocate of the "do it now" policy. Whitman could wait. Traubel was impulsive. Whitman was tolerant of any creed that worked for the ultimate good. Traubel was impatient in his absolute confidence that people could be made happy now through the application of the principles of Socialism in present day life. Whitman was slow and meditative. Traubel was quick and responsive. That fundamental difference in their natures is evidenced in their writings. Whitman's poems are in long, swinging, sublime sentences and one follows his impersonal spirit to the inevitable cadence of the last word. Traubel began with an impulsive phrase. Another, another, short, quick, incisive. His words pour upon you like a torrent of vital-

ity, soaking into your skin, flooding your soul with sunlight and permeating the deepest recesses of your mind with their buoyant, contagious optimism and philosophy. Whitman was impersonally indirect. Traubel was personally direct. Whitman gave hints and suggestions that something was wrong with the world in which the many struggle and have so little, while the few idle and have so much. Traubel went at his subject with hammer and tong, proving his case with irrefragable fact. His exhibits were poverty, social ills in the upper and lower stratas of society, crime that is legal and crime that is illegal, strikes, lockouts, boycotts, tears and broken hearts.

Whitman was a mystic whose point of view one had to fathom. Traubel was a mystic whose abstractions were shadowed by his own logic. *Leaves of Grass* is all-inclusive and is a book of elemental truths. But *Leaves of Grass* does not define. Whitman cut the path through an almost impenetrable wilderness of thought, breaking down many barriers of superstition and dogma. Traubel followed up Whitman's pioneer work and constructed a smooth roadbed.

Whitman was vital and fundamental, but one must go on to Traubel. One may read *Leaves of Grass* and revolt against the sundry injustices in the world without knowing just where to begin in humanizing the globe. One cannot read *Optimos* without realizing that the place to begin is in one's self. *Optimos* contains the essence of Whitman and the purpose of Traubel. There are even some who believe that *Optimos* is more complete than *Leaves of Grass* because it contains the spiritual force augmented by the economic fact.

There is not the slightest technical similarity between Whitman's prose and that of Traubel. With Whitman one may go off into the woods and lie down by the side of a cool stream, rest his head upon the protruding root of a giant tree and feel the sacred silence of the wide forest. As one reads "The Good-Grey Poet" he may often be tempted to lay his book aside now and then and fall to dreaming as he gazes beyond the veil of over-arching boughs into the illimitable sky.

With Traubel it is different. From start to finish the normal serenity of one's mind is jarred and jolted by the myriad convolutions of his crisp sentences. He starts off with an admonition such as, "Don't be afraid to go with the people." Later on he convinces you that "the new individualism sets its persons down in the thick of the crowd" and that "an autonomy that has to hermit itself to maintain its integrity is the worst slavery." He declares to you that "the crowd is my home" and assures you that nothing so pacifies him "as the drive and drift of the mob." He reminds you that "it's the man at the bottom to whom you owe the most. It's the man at the top to whom you owe the least." Out of the printed page you can see Traubel shaking his finger at you, exclaiming that the common people are the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. You hear yourself saying "amen" and you wonder why you haven't always thought of the same thing.

You pause to recover your breath and balance, and brace yourself for the next inevitable torrent.—"Civilization is coincident with injustice. It goes with the robbery of the poor and the starvation of children. It goes with our luxuries and refinements." You are

defeated by the crash of your cherished superstitions and blinded by the flying debris of your conventional ideas. You read on and on, affirming, acquiescing against your will; doubting, disapproving in favor of what you believe is common sense. Somehow you always thought the wall of tradition and respectability about you was impregnable, but now you see it crumbling under the weight of social consciousness that slowly dawns upon you, with the power and personality of Traubel that speaks out from the printed page. He does not leave you stranded amid the wreck and ruin of your illusions. He takes you by the hand and calmly asks, "My brother, don't you know better? Don't you understand that you've been misled by false guides? Return to the mob." And he hears you dissent: "I can't live my life in the crowd." But he answers: "You can't live your life except in the crowd. Going somewhere beyond is like wanting to be a tree in a desert. It's like wanting to get near God by staying far from people. It's like expecting to shine in a sky that has no other luminaries." He tells you a simple story about a sunbeam that got youthproud and said: "I'll have no more to do with the sun. But that only ended the sunbeam. It didn't put out the sun." You shake your head and say that's only a story. He gives you one more chance to be foolish enough to come with the people for love against your wisdom to remain with persons for property. Here is his smashing, pouring, ripping torrent of logic that engulfs you and breaks down the last barrier between you and the people: "A grain of sand got tired of being a mere atom in a countless mass. A drop of water spoke up and said it didn't see why it

wasn't the ocean. A baby just born thought of itself as its own mother. When lungs can go on breathing without a man. When feet can go on walking without legs. When children can come into the world without parents. When stars can be kept in space without gravitation. When you can have up without down and black without white. When you can have right without wrong. When you can have death without life. When you can have evolution without God. Only then can you have persons without people. Only then can you have a peak without a mountain."

Traubel's technique was slow in developing. Many of his earlier poems were written in the style of conventional rhyme, while his prose of that period — the late eighties and early nineties — was formed according to the scholastic standards. It is interesting to start with the very first issue of *The Conservator* and read on through the thirty years of Traubel's writings. It will be found that one fact stands out pre-eminently, and that is that his technique developed in accordance with the growth of his ideals. Both are inseparable and must be considered as a whole. Traubel tried to be simpler than the simplest. He sought to present himself absolutely in his common vocabulary. He never allowed language to usurp the place of an idea. Traubel never had any illusions about writing as a profession or about professional writers. In a *Collect* in *The Conservator*, March, 1914, he exposed the shams of his craft and denounced the hypocrisy of his fellow craftsmen:—

"You writers who are trying to write. You artists anywhere who are trying for art. You who may be successful but have not arrived. You who hold yourselves

in a class apart and play the game of temperament. You fools, liars, ornamenters, hypocrites, prostitutes, of words. You who wouldn't sell your bodies but who sell your souls. You who have taken to the street for profit. You who hunger for flattery and thirst for fame. You betrayers of the people. You who put words on yourselves as chains. You are goods to the highest bidder. All of you, I have something to say to you. You may have said it to yourself. But I'm going to say it anyhow. Both for your good and mine. Something serious. Something that goes to the root. I'll talk right out. For somehow you who might be are not. You to whom a trust is given have betrayed it. I believe in the sacredness of the word. I want words to be gods, paradises, service. I want words to live. I want words to be creators. Some writers are so vital they cant say and or the or but without thrilling you. There are some writers so dead they cant say immortality without a funeral. I want the living word. How can I get it? By using words instead of being used by words. By speaking out of my heart instead of out of books. By not trying to write. By living. Some authors write as if they never had been born.

. . . . . " My words belong where my heart is. I am not willing to feel one thing and write another. Let me be the servant of my emotions. Down below all my words is all my life. Rooted in the soil. Established in the unalterable laws. Dedicated to the supreme inferences. If my words dont say that they lie about me. I am the fact the words are supposed to report. If they dont express me I go unrepresented.

. . . . . " There are so many writers and there

is so little writing. There is so much painting and there are so few pictures. We are overclothed. Our wardrobe is rich. We are jeweled. We are placed on thrones. But what are we anyhow? We are humbug kings. We are fraud citizens. What we are not we are. What we are we are not. The same thing which makes some men look for social prestige makes an author look for literary prestige. We give up the same things for it. We lie and duck and play sycophant for it. We fool people. We make black white and white black. We trifle away serious things. And we are serious over trifles. All for what? In order to appear what we are not. We are masqueraders. Words are the tools of our burglary. Words are the cant of our religion. Words are the sophistry of our law. Words are the fog we lose our way in.

. . . . . "Go look at the books in libraries. They are the roster of the dead. Most men bury themselves in books. Only occasionally does a man resurrect himself in a book. He makes his writing the parade. It marches with brass bands. Everybody knows it's coming. And everybody knows of it after it's gone. But nothing can make it live. Active as it seems to be it's still a burial. You who have tried so hard and have not succeeded may yet learn that he only succeeds who don't try at all. When you try — that means that you're up against it. When you've got to engineer. When you've got to watch your ps and qs.

. . . . . "You merchants in words. You traders of dreams. You who are always trying for art but never try for love. You who always estheticise with the elect but refuse to fraternize with the crowd. You who go the way the wind blows. You who



yield to art the tribute of life instead of exacting for life the tribute of art. You who are the climbers. You who would give up your souls for a phrase. You who would rather write a pretty sentence. You who would rather have a style. You who would rather be classified with the intellectuals. You whatever you are beg, borrow or steal your way into eminence. You distorters of scripture. You criminals of words. You parricides of gospels. You executioners of discovery. You smotherers of freedom. You writers who are trying to write."

The grammarians and scholars are still horrified at the manner in which Traubel violated the rules of school room and university rhetorics. In his prose he frequently used "aint" for "have not," and "dont" without the apostrophe for "do not" and "does not." He used "do not" to be emphatic, and "dont" casually. He told of an incident when one of his subscribers sent back to him *The Conservator* in which the "errors" in spelling had been "corrected." The reader courteously acknowledged that the "errors" were probably those of the compositor. Traubel said that if he did not find the word he wanted he made one. "Optimos" is a Traubel word. In explaining its meaning to a curious friend he said: "If I can say cosmos meaning the whole, why shouldn't I say optimos meaning the cheerful whole?"

To many persons Traubel is more significant as a critic. Some of his friends said they read his paper for nothing else but his book reviews. Without being inclined toward any such discrimination of his work, I realize the prophetic message he expressed in his book criticisms. His reviews are anything else but

formal pieces about current literature seen so often in contemporary publications and the daily press. Traubel probed the vitals of a book without necessarily going into details about the author's work. He gave the key to the book which opens the door to Traubel. In all books Traubel looked first for the human element. He did not tolerate art as usurping the place of life. If people did not write out of life rather than out of books, Traubel would not waste any time reading them. He delighted in writing about a book antagonistic to the principles in which he believed. Each of his book reviews is an essay on the subject matter of the book. Not even in his *Collects* did he give such a variation of thought as is contained in his book reviews. Many authors whose names are more or less generally known have praised Traubel as a critic. Books which Traubel read are marked and passages underscored from cover to cover.

Traubel's book criticisms should be resurrected from the files of *The Conservator* and published. They are vital and fundamental and form potential volumes of radical literature. Traubel never bent his knee to the editors in the clearing houses of literature.

Several years ago a well known editor of a metropolitan daily offered Traubel a lucrative position on his staff to write a paragraph or two of editorial comment at the head of current news items. But the offer, entailing a substantial salary, was not even considered. Traubel frequently contributed matter to the daily press, but these fugitive pieces were always sent with his demand that they be printed exactly as he wrote them or else returned. This unyielding, uncompromising, rigid adherence to his ideals had to a large ex-

tent resulted in his being ostracized from the formal circles of his craft, and also in his writing being almost totally ignored by the moulders and purveyors of public opinion. Yet, he was in constant association with the protagonists of revolt. In answer to this almost self-imposed ostracism Traubel exclaimed triumphantly: "I build no fires to burn anybody up. I only build fires to light the way."

## CHAPTER X

### POET AND PROPHET

**I**T is not as technician that we are now considering Traubel, but as poet and prophet of the new order of democracy. Nowhere do we find Traubel in a minor key. He inevitably strikes the major note. His rhymeless verses, which are devoid of the formal lilt, although they possess an unmistakable rhythm, must needs be considered in the light of their strength of spirit. In *Chants Communal*, Traubel has written the proclamation of labor, serving warning upon the unjust elements of the world that the spirit of democracy has arisen from its tomb and challenges the priests who crucified it. He takes from the streets the wrecks in human form, remoulds them in the social spirit and dedicates their brain and brawn to loving service. He takes the huts and hovels of the poor, secreted in the sunless niches of our cities and fills them with happiness and hope in the day when every house and tent that shelters a man and a woman shall be a mansion of love and a palace of fellowship.

As we read *Chants Communal* it seems that Traubel had written the manifesto of the coming social democracy of the world. That book contains the economic reasoning of Karl Marx and the spiritual doctrine of Jesus Christ. In it, labor makes both an appeal and a threat, a warning and a challenge. The book is electrified with the inclusive spirit of the man who

wrote it, and he could be no other than a poet who had a vision of a grander day when all the sons of men will rejoice in the liberty they have won at so precious a price. Chants Communal could have been written by no other than a prophet who foretells the first coming of the worker.

Many people knew of Traubel as the intimate friend and companion of Walt Whitman. Librarians, scholars and literary persons knew him as the biographer of "The Good Grey Poet"; but to many radical thinkers and writers he was known as a poet and prophet in his own right, who sang of the divinity of all men and preached a gospel of love. In the midst of perplexities and disappointments and conflicting situations, Traubel sang:

I have had such joy on the earth,  
So many of the things that seemed to have started wrong  
have ended right,  
So many of the ecstasies have come out of so many of the  
sorrows of the years,  
So many of the most clouded mornings have so opened the  
way to the most sunny afternoons.  
Evil has everywhere and always so refused to stop with evil  
and has gone on to good,  
Death has everywhere and always so refused to stop with  
death and has gone on to life,  
That I stand happy and satisfied surveying the tangle through  
which I have broken.

Every morning he asked:

How are you dear world this morning?  
Clean from my bath of sleep,  
Warm from the bosom of my mother star,

Recharged with the energy of my father self,  
Restored from all derelict hours to the lawful service of time,  
I come without gift or doctrine or tethering humor  
To entertain your fateful will.

When the day had spent its charge and the stars  
and the moon resumed their tireless vigil by the bed-  
side of the sleeping world the poet chanted this ode  
to the spirit of night:

The world of the night — the shadow, the veil: behind it the  
life-drift.

Do you ever beckon this far away world through your own  
open door?

This is not the world of reputations or the world of saints,  
This is not the world of the orderly or the world of the  
formal good:

This is the world of the homeless and the world of the  
derelicts:

This is my world — the world where my outcast comrades  
pay penance of pain for my desire.

This is the big world the little world forgets — the victim  
glory my victor shame unfolds:

The savior world of corruption, the redemptist world of  
crime:

This is the world soiled and illicit upon whose cross no  
aureole falls —

The world of men and women despised dear to me beyond  
the dearest forever.

The poet of today must be the poet of peoples. The  
laureates who sung of artificial beauty, of aristocra-  
cies, and militarism are gone and forever. The poet  
of today is the poet of the crowd, the poet in whose  
song is heard the echo of the mightiest voice in the  
world — the voice of labor crying for the brotherhood  
and the sisterhood of men and women. The greatest  
poets of the world today are men who have broken

away from the beaten paths of old techniques and points of view. In their songs are heard the fierce cries of the driven people. Because of the evolutionary processes through which labor is slowly ascending towards democracy, the past generation, especially the last decade, has produced many poets who have extolled labor's cause. Many of these are called "second-Whitmans." "I would rather be a first Traubel than a second Whitman," said Horace when he read of a poet so called.

The day of just, merited appreciation has not yet dawned for Traubel, because the star of labor has not shone in the world firmament. Traubel will never be popular in the drawing rooms and formal literary circles. There is a democracy about both him and his message which forbids "the vulgar level" of popularity and rears a barrier between him and the conventional hero-worshippers. He knew the measure of the polite idlers, postponers and dabblers in intellectual subjects. Traubel will never be wholly popular with the worker until the worker measures his stature in terms of love and brotherhood, and realizes his potential power and grasps the fundamental meaning of world justice, world truth, world love, and alienates itself from dogmas, jealousies and small-change reforms and platitudes. Not until labor finds out for itself that it is as great, as true and as worthy as Traubel held it to be, will labor understand Traubel and his message. Some of the world's keenest thinkers and bravest souls have recognized Traubel's real significance. He has received the most extraordinary praise from people who are in the fore rank of literature and radical thought. But not until the hewer of wood

and the drawer of water cease hewing wood and drawing water for their masters will Traubel really be recognized.

"My democracy has included that which excluded it," he wrote some while ago. That sentence, it would seem, sums up the basic reason why Traubel is not more widely read by the people. Mentioned by Maxim Gorky with Walt Whitman, Maurice Maeterlinck, Anatole France and H. G. Wells, Traubel has a much lesser audience than any of the four mentioned. Traubel did not speak with the common tongue of the crowd, yet he planted his flag in the thick of the social struggle for justice. He took woman from her little sphere within four walls and placed her in the parliament of the world. He lifted sex from its vaulted tomb of hypocrisy, prudery and pruriency and dedicated it to the sacred offices of love. He released sex from the conspiracy of silence. This he did away back in the years before the writings of Mrs. Havelock Ellis, Ellen Key and Charlotte Perkins Gilman had won a sympathetic audience. Away back there in the late eighties and the early nineties Traubel was writing prophetically of the ideal man and woman.

Thinkers may roughly be divided into two separate and distinct classes: those interested in other persons' thoughts, and those interested in their own thoughts. Traubel appealed especially to the first class of thinkers, and remotely to the second class. One might have observed that intellectuals almost instantly took an interest in and sympathized with Traubel's message. Stage folk, writers, artists, journalists and many professors were among his staunch friends and admirers. Traubel's art found in these people an



unhesitating response. One must cultivate a taste for Traubel's dynamic writing. That requires time. The generalization of his ideas will require much longer. If the American people were to take up Traubel and read him sympathetically it would signify a new awakening intellectually and socially; it would signify individual thought preparing itself for collective action for liberty, politically and industrially.

"My democracy has included that which excluded it," said Traubel, fully conscious of the fact that labor was not yet ready to admit him as being one of its spokesmen.

The following extract from the poem, "My Plain Song Is Not Heard," strikes what is perhaps the saddest note in Optimos, and yet it reveals the poet's supreme confidence in himself and in his work:

My plain song is not heard:  
It lifts its simple cadence in love and benediction,  
It travels the usual ways in the usual dress of men —  
Like the river it keeps to its natural course and is not  
    remarked,  
And like the clouds it is driven here and there obediently  
    to its law —  
But the masters pass it by hearing nothing or resenting what  
    they hear,  
And the echoers of the masters pass it by because the masters  
    ignore or reject the unaccustomed note,  
And so though it does not stop singing it sings mainly to  
    itself  
And is joyful within itself and sufficient and looks for no  
    return.

And yet my song is heard because I hear it with my own  
    ears,  
And it is answered because I respond to it in my days and  
    nights of love,

And it flies far because it is pledged to keep up with my  
ideals,  
And it sings true because it adds my laughter to my tears  
in one total of joy,  
And that is enough because honesty is always enough,  
And that is enough because not being known is always  
enough,  
And so though I sing forever and I alone hear my song  
I am audience enough and I cheer my journey with sweet  
acclaim.

In his poem, "When I Am Easy About Love," we see our own little sphere merged with the grandeur of the universe, and bad no longer usurps the place of good, and the veil of hate no longer shades the light of love, and the differences between persons disappear in the understanding of comrades:

When I am easy about love I am easy about life and death!  
It makes no difference to me then if the sun does not shine:  
I am not worried because affairs go wrong when love goes  
right:  
I reach out and somehow everything falls into the palm of  
my hand—  
All beauty and goodness fall there, all dreaming and hoping  
fall there:  
Though I own no lands and am without fame yet I am as  
rich as love:  
The old jealousies slip away, the grudges and animosities  
slink out of sight:  
Now all life gathers round me—all the people and all the  
stars, gather:  
For being easy about love and being easy about life is like  
being finally free:  
For then I go to everything and everything comes to me  
and the dissenting spheres are blended.

The beauty and simplicity of the following little

verse compares in technique and thought with any of his best poetry :

When we understand each other, all in all,  
When two friends understand each other after they have  
misunderstood,  
When nations understand each other in peace after they have  
misunderstood each other in war,  
When fathers, mothers, children, friends, people, understand,  
all understand all,  
Oh! that must be heaven — there is nothing beyond.

The passionate lover of humanity who was incessantly talking and dreaming of the dear love of comrades bursts forth in eloquent appeal in the following stanza :

I'm just talking all the time about love:  
I try sometimes to talk of other things but I come back to  
love:  
To my simple love for men and women, to my love for you,  
to my love for life:  
Not caring at all what may be said of me because of it,  
coming back to love:  
From whatever excursion into other fields, where other  
motives prevail, coming back to love:  
Something in my heart driving me: something in you im-  
pelling me: something: something:  
The casual day not satisfying me: the casual ambitions and  
rewards:  
The being thought a lot of not satisfying me: the fame:  
the noise of popular approval:  
Rather shrinking from that: rather preferring to pass around  
seeing but remaining unseen:  
Putting in my word for love wherever I can: even when it  
seems out of place or unwelcome:  
Just saying love everywhere and everyhow so that all may  
hear: saying love:

Lowering my voice in the noise so I may be heard in the  
silences:

Raising by voice in the silences so I may be heard in the  
noise:

But saying the same thing wherever: saying the same thing:  
saying love: just love:

Making people mad: appearing at the wrong time: saying  
love, love, whether they listen or are deaf:

All I write, do, dream, look for, being love: all I work for  
being love:

Just love: just love: just love.

Traubel closes Optimos with the following verse:

No dream is wasted in the last stretch of the day,

No soul is lost in the final count of the race:

The old negations are denied, the guards of life and death  
are dismissed, the long distrusted stream is left to its  
course:

Gods who disown men are self crucified: no hell is so black  
as the court that condemns men to it.

Service is self benediction; rule is self restraint.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOCIAL REVOLUTIONIST

**A** WORLD that might be happy and contented through cooperation and understanding is divided into two hostile camps — the oppressors and the oppressed. Both sides are armed to the teeth. The oppressors have fortified themselves with the law and logic of their class with pulpit and press, and with shot and shrapnel to prove the worthiness of their cause. The oppressed are equally defiant, but their weapon is much less imposing. Justice! On that rests their whole strength, and so long as they employ it in their own class, keep the line steady and think and act in unison they will win, for they not only have superior numbers, but they have superior intelligence, and superior love, one for another.

It was in the camp of the oppressed that we found Traubel, who, as we have seen, very early in his life planted his flag in the thick of the political and industrial struggle.

Now we shall study Traubel, the revolutionist, for any sketch of his life that fails to emphasize his significance in the labor movement is incomplete. The thinker by instinct is the revolutionist in one form or another. I accept the view that Traubel, the revolutionist, has created Traubel, the poet. As a young man of 25 years, Traubel showed pronounced revolutionary tendencies. His essays and monographs writ-

ten during that period were of a social and economic nature, reflecting his idealism of the common workman. His poems written during the same period do not contain that profound expression of social religion that characterize his poetry of latter days. His early poems were mystical, proving that Traubel was adopting an economic and social philosophy of life before attempting to record the struggle of the working class.

It is my aim to show that Traubel, with an increasing number of persons, believed that the only people worth thinking about and serving are those of the working class, in the broad sense of that term, which does not exclude those who, though they may be wealthy in the material sense, are none the less rich spiritually and dedicate their labor to social ends. Traubel said it was foolish, cruel and unjust for the worker to view with suspicion those persons of wealth, who have by thought and act alienated themselves from the ruling class in which they inherited or acquired their bank account. It is as a man thinks and acts that determines his philosophy of life.

Justice is always a sufficient reason for revolution. But there can be neither sound principle nor purpose in a revolution not inspired by justice. For the text of the revolutionary pronunciamento we can well afford to consider in that light Traubel's scripture piece in *Chants Communal*:

"Forever first of all is justice. Is love. Not the food you eat. Not the clothes you wear. Not the luxuries you enjoy. But justice. Everything must stand aside for justice. You have a trade, and you think your trade comes before justice. You are a man of business and you think that business comes

before justice. Yes, before love. You practice a profession. Your profession comes before justice. Fatal fallacy. Justice stands first. Justice precedes all the witnesses of life. Justice is the only final witness to life. You may satisfy every other claim. But nothing is done for life until justice is satisfied. You have ordered your life. But you have left no room for justice. You have taken all the details into account. You have forgotten or foresworn justice. And justice is forever first of all. Justice is the only thing that takes care of all. Justice speaks the only universal tongue. Anything short of justice is parley, apology or flight. The human spirit owes itself a supreme debt. The debt of justice. Justice is the common providence. Look for justice. When you see justice you do not see rulers. You do not see bonds bearing interest. You do not see lands paying rent. You do not see the storekeeper pocketing profits. You see men refusing margins and bounties. You see men refusing to subject other men to their talents. Justice declares that talent shall not buy and sell. It grants talent one privilege. Surrender. Talent does not belong to the individual. It belongs to all. Justice is first of all. It starts man with man on the square. It keeps the race on loyal terms with itself. It gives life general not special sanctions. What is best your own is more than best the inheritance of the race. I cannot separate my personal gifts from the impersonal treasure. From justice. For justice is forever first of all. I know what the professional logicians say. Justice is not logic. What the preacher says when he faces the money in his parish. Justice is not religion. What the statesmen say in their cabinets. Justice is

not politics. And when the doctor is filling me with drugs he says justice is not medicine. And when the painter is painting a picture for fame or for money he says that justice is not art. And when the poet has dedicated his verses to a person he says that justice is not song. And when the lawyer lies in his brief he says that justice is not law. And when the tradesman hogs his excesses he says that justice is not trade. And when the landlord evicts a tenant he says that justice is not rent. And even when the workman gathers in his wages he says that justice is not hire. And so we have reduced life to bargain and sale. All are not giving life for life. Each man is giving his all for every other man's all. But each man is making the sharpest dicker he can for life. Getting the most he can get of life for the least he must give of life. And this adjustment is the current adjustment of religion, of art and of law. That is what the world calls righteousness. And when I come along crying for justice. Weeping for justice. My heart filled with sorrow seeing the lack of justice. Filled with elation seeing the inevitability of justice. They are all at my heels decrying my logic. The priest is at my heels. The statesman is at my heels. The poet is at my heels. The artist is at my heels. All the sellers and buyers are at my heels. Even the wagemen, the innocents transgressed, are at my heels. And I barely escape with my life. And yet justice is forever first of all."

In the foregoing Traubel has enunciated the fundamental principle of Socialism in contrast with the primary purpose of capitalism. He says rent, interest and profit, the chief pillars of capitalism must be sub-



stituted for love, fellowship and service, the paramount principles of Socialism. But any fundamental principle of life or government can only be achieved through some specific medium of organization. Principle without purpose is like bread without salt, air without oxygen, tree without root, body without breath, class without consciousness. Traubel said Socialism must connect in the open with every-day life, with the common man, who must define its intrinsic value and fathom its potentiality. Karl Marx, the German philosopher and economist, by pointing out the inherent weakness of capitalism, indicated the economic method through which the workers may achieve Socialism, but he did not discover Socialism any more than Luther Burbank discovered the seed from which he cultivates his wonderful fruit. The principle of Socialism is identical with the teaching of Christ. It grows with the soul of man and manifests itself in his acts and attitude toward life.

Because of the unyielding and formidable opposition of the ruling class which is strongly entrenched in governmental privilege, is merciless and insatiable, the workers have found it necessary to hitch their dream of an equitable society in which there shall be neither princes nor paupers, to a definite program on the political and industrial fields, and through which they hope to accomplish their social emancipation.

An awakened conscience abroad in the world has taken a definite stand before all our institutions, saying to them that labor shall not be a commodity subject to barter and sale in the commercial world. It says that labor is inevitably the laborer, who is entitled not only to the superior respect and consideration of the world,

but who also shall receive the full product of his labor and be-master of his own destiny. Traubel interpreted that spirit in its broadest meaning, declaring that anything less is "parley, apology or flight."

"The great fundamental principle of anti-slavery," said Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist, "is that man cannot hold property in man." Traubel would say that the fundamental principle of anti-wage slavery is that man cannot hold property in another man's job. For that is the seed, and the root, and the branch, and the fruit of industrial and social agitation that has been worrying the world since the feudal lords of land gave place to the capitalist kings of industry. Today the workman is worth only his hire, and although he creates the gigantic industries as well as their product, he does not even own his job, and is therefore at the mercy of some man, or group of men, who, because of their wealth acquired through the intricacies of trade and the docility of workmen, are the masters of commerce. The average American workman has within himself great social powers. He is lord and master of himself and his future the moment he gets off his knees and surveys his stature, not in terms of length or breadth, but through his vision of intelligence.

The workman today is nominally a free agent, economically and politically. That is to say, he can work for whomever he pleases (and take whatever amount the employer is pleased to give him) and vote for his own candidates. And surely that is freedom. But Traubel as a militant Socialist always pointed out that where the free workman becomes a slave is in the factory, or the mine, or the shop — after he has taken his choice of jobs — because he does not own the tools

with which he works, and has no say over the value of his hire nor how long it shall last. This is especially true in the cases of unskilled and unorganized workers. Where the worker becomes a political subject is after he has exercised his sovereign rights of franchise and voted into power men who later club him into submission through the judicial, legislative and executive branches of government. The Socialist party meets this condition broadly by telling the workman to use his political power by voting into office men of his own class, who would use their office in freeing the workman from wage bondage on the industrial field. The Socialist party, then, is the bridge that spans the political and industrial organizations.

On the industrial field, as on the political field, Traubel took a militant stand. He was for the closed shop, which he said led to the open world. "The world today seems to be against us. The world of the future will be on our side," he declared. "Labor begins to see that it is only protected when it protects itself. Therefore it gets its particles together. It ceases to be a thing of items and becomes a total. It goes two ways. It goes right and it goes wrong. It is beautiful, and it is ugly. That is, it is in a condition of struggle. It will emerge clarified. That force which on the march is a class will on its arrival become a people. We glorify the closed shop. Or we damn the closed shop. The closed shop is a manifest both of affirmation and negation. It signifies lack of faith first and then a greater faith to come. It is not a virtue. It is a shield. It is not right or wrong. It is gravitation. It is a result. Something happened preceding it. Then this thing had to happen. There was no way out of it. God could not set the tables of its

mandate aside. And now that this thing has happened something further is to happen. Something just as little to be evaded. The stream flows on its way. It cannot be diverted. It is going toward the greatest light. From darkness to light and from light to more light and from more light to illumination. There was supply and demand. There was competition. There was graft. There was the law of money dominating the law of souls. The laborer finding himself hopelessly under fire in the world of fight has shut himself in the closed shop. The closed shop is not here to stay. Its function is not fixed. It is here to pass man on. And after it has passed man on it will disintegrate. It will take down its four walls and go into voluntary oblivion. Meantime it is intermediately vital and preservative. It is against liberty? No. It is for liberty. It is a troubled effort of liberty to observe the covenant. It is the only resource left to liberty to play a safe hand with the cards stacked against it. I do not say the closed shop is liberty. I say it leads to liberty. If liberty with the closed shop is in danger liberty without the closed shop is lost. You quote the one man who is trespassed. I quote the fifty men whom the one man trespasses. I do not say the liberty of the one man should be invaded. I say the liberty of the fifty men should not be forgotten."

In the foregoing, which is an extract from an article on craft unionism published in *The Arena*, May, 1908, Traubel covered the ground of trade unionism on the basis of which the American Federation of Labor operates. The idea of craft organization is gradually being supplanted by the principle of industrial organi-

zation. That is, instead of organizing workmen by trades organize them by industries. This latter method or form meets with the approval of liberals in the social and economic movements. Just five years after the publication of his article on craft unionism, an extract of which has just been quoted, Traubel endorsed, unqualifiedly, the principle of industrial organization. This is what he wrote: "Craft unionism was inevitable and has mainly done its work. Industrial unionism was just as inevitable and is now doing its work. The people who think the revolution is going to be handed down are mistaken. And the people who think it's going to be handed up are mistaken. It's going to grow out of the body and soul. It's not fiat. It's no set of rules. It's no formula inherited or revealed. It's the next harvest. It's as bad to say: To hell with you; we'll do this for ourselves, as to say: To hell with you; we'll do this for you. The man with the right life. He's the man of the hour. He's the man who's doing the job. Whether he happens to have come up from the social hell to the earth or down from the social heaven to the earth doesn't matter. The thing we know now is that we're on the earth. That we're together. That we've clasped hands. That we are sworn to the same result. It's a fool conclusion — the idea that only one thing is bringing on the crisis and the change. No Socialist party, no I. W. W., no program of modified or relentless rebellion could do it all. The I. W. W. is tilling a field that has never been cultivated before. It says things and does things with which I disagree. But it says more things to which I assent. So I take it for all in all."

Traubel was constantly evolving from one plane to another with the progress of social and economic

theory. He kept apace with the enlarging horizon. Certainly the romance of our age is in its economics, and, as Traubel said, all our heroics are on the industrial plane. "We have left the humbug theatricals behind us. We have stopped sky-rocketing. The enormous mills. The vast railroads. The immense department stores. They are our seats of learning and the arena of our tragedy and comedy. You may go to sleep over a play or a novel, but you'll wake up over a strike. You'll be unmoved when Romeo makes love to Juliet, but you'll warm into a flame listening to some firebrand soap-boxer on the street corner. The new unionism is the new world. The new unionism is the new poetry. Yes, the new art. The new unionism which takes in the whole aroused democracy. Which doesn't sow its seed in one class, but in all classes. The new unionism, penetrating every avenue to communal energy. Politics, industry, science, religion: penetrating all. The new unionism is the new dream. The new unionism is the new way of life. It can't be named. The I. W. W. dont name it. Syndicalism dont name it. Anarchism dont name it. Progressivism, liberalism, radicalism dont name it. The Socialist party dont name it. Socialism alone names it. Socialism. Anti-profit. Pro-man. Socialism, big enough to mother father all its warring children. That's the new unionism. That's the new earth. Yes, the new heaven, too. That alone."

Traubel was a revolutionary Socialist, to whom offices, elections, ballots, strikes and legislation are elements of procedure. He held they were not conclusive, but led toward the conclusion. He regarded them merely as the necessary paraphernalia of liberty.

Traubel's Socialism was not merely an orthodox manifesto. It was not confined by any political orthodoxy or connected with any industrial dogma. It was free, open-and-above-board life. Traubel contended against the Socialist who was strictly political in his agitation, for he realized that a great mass of workers in America and elsewhere do not possess the ballot and are propertyless. For these there is no other recourse to emancipation than the use of their industrial power in seeking to sever the chains that bind them in industrial slavery. On the other hand, there is the migratory workman, who being without permanent abode and lacking political and governmental sympathies sees only fallacy in political action. And Traubel said that he, too, was wrong. There is a bridge that must span the political and industrial arms of social organization if the working class is ever to achieve its emancipation. Traubel stood with Debs and many others in the revolutionary movement in insisting that it is the function of the Socialist party to bridge the gap of misunderstanding between the political and industrial forces. This misunderstanding is not necessarily serious. It does not even constitute a breach. But there is a lack of co-operation, co-ordination between these two powerful branches of radical thought and action. Traubel was constantly saying that it was a mistake to believe there can be political equity without industrial justice, since politics are the threads woven into the fabric of our national life and one vitally affects the other.

Traubel did not say the Socialist party is infallible. He did not say the industrial wing is infallible. He said he knew the job of humanizing the world was too big for either alone and too big for both together, and

so he accepted anything he could get from them that's to the good and did not worry over their individual imperfections. He did not expect the millennium to be handed out by anybody, god or devil. He contended that if the Socialist party failed to do the work expected of it on the political field the work would get done anyway. And the same of the industrial organizations. "The Lord is interested in getting the work done," he said, "and if one instrument won't work another will." That may sound like opportunism. If it is opportunistic to accept a quarter without ceasing to demand the whole, then Traubel was an opportunist. Then the world is an opportunist world. A cup of water to a famishing man in the Sahara Desert is a godsend, yet his thirst may not be quenched until he has had a pitcher full of water. Traubel declared "the thing the world is going toward very rapidly is human fusion. The working class has got to get together. Everywhere. Not on the industrial field alone. Nor on the political field alone. In every way everywhere." Anything that helped to bring that along looked good to Traubel, and anything that tended to prevent it looked bad to him.

He never retreated an inch from his positive stand for the complete effacement of the capitalist system, which he held responsible for political and industrial wrongs that cause so much human suffering in the world. Traubel did not hold any brief for the apologists who admit there is something wrong with the world, but who deny or evade the source of social evil.



## CHAPTER XII

### INTERNATIONALIST

**T**HROUGHOUT the five years of the world war Horace Traubel remained steadfast to his undying faith in man. The two continents have not produced a more loyal internationalist than he who ranks with the martyred Karl Liebknecht of Germany, the slain Jean Jaures of France; the banished Bertrand Russell of England, and the imprisoned Eugene V. Debs, of America.

In that dreadful August, 1914, the majority of Socialists of each belligerent nation suddenly found themselves trapped in the vortex of war, and although they had pledged themselves to keep the International inviolate, to love their fellowmen and to respect their mutual class interests, they became nationalists and many of them actually fought to kill their comrades.

In the United States, as the bloody battles on the other side progressed and the pendulum of victory swung between the Allied Powers and the Germanic armies, many of our own Socialists took sides, not according to their concepts of international brotherhood, but under the hateful influence of racial antipathies, and national passions and prejudices.

In a struggle of that magnitude, international in character, and world-wide in the scope of its influences, we are made to realize individual strength and weakness, cosmic courage and impotence. The organ-

ized working classes of the world realized too late the feebleness of their resolutions for class solidarity. Possessed with the power of effecting a general strike in the principal industries of Europe, the workers imagined they held in their hands a sword of steel. But when they attempted to apply it they discovered their weapon was but a reed that bent at the first thrust.

That huge cataclysm, which outraged the imagination, served to set out in bold relief the gold from the dross, the wheat from the chaff, the internationalists from the nationalists, the lovers from the haters. The truly great figures in this conflict were pitifully few when we consider the millions of persons involved in it.

Traubel's position on the the war was that of a revolutionary Socialist who viewed the struggle from the standpoint of the interests of the working class. His whole concern was with the workers of all the countries, and his one hope, expressed at the very beginning of the conflict, was that the workers would fight the war to a revolution. His prophecy has been fulfilled thus far in Russia, Germany, Hungary — and in a few lesser countries, where political upheavals presage social revolution. The universality of Traubel's stand on the war is proved by letters which he received from friends and admirers in at least three of the warring nations — England, France and Germany. His paper, *The Conservator*, was read in the trenches of France by Leon Bazalgette, Whitman's translator and biographer, and in London by Bernard Shaw whose note of endorsement to Traubel I had the pleasure of reading. It has gone past the British

censors to Germany where those who received it responded to its message. It has even gone to Italy and Japan, and met with the same responsive sympathy.

Traubel's war-writings were voluminous, yet, as might be expected, they constituted the minority report. The war at least afforded the opportunity of getting a range on the *renowned* philosophers and authors, many of whom became hopelessly bewildered when the supreme test of their accredited wisdom came with the hurricane.

The issues of *The Conservator* from September, 1914, one month after the beginning of hostilities, to the signing of the armistice, were all "war numbers" inasmuch as the majority of Traubel's poems, Collects and book reviews during that period were devoted to various angles of the European holocaust. Any one having any doubt as to the influence of the war upon American literature need only look through the files of *The Conservator*. But Traubel was merely emphasizing then what he contended all his life. He did not need a great war to prove to him "the mess which Capitalism has made of things." He had written in this vein since first he became a Socialist. In 1910 Traubel wrote an anti-militarism article for the *Boston Sunday Globe*. We find in it material which is consistent with his anti-war and pro-peace doctrine of four years later.

Perhaps Traubel's best writings on the war were contributed intermittently during 1915 and 1916 to the *Altoona (Pa.) Times*. In those brief pieces he reached his point in short, crisp, incisive sentences that total not over three quarters of a newspaper column. He wrote some of the most startling, daring articles

for the Times that are to be found anywhere among his writings, and certainly among the most fearless that appeared in America.

Traubel defined his position on the war clearly in the following paragraphs which appeared in the Altoona Times, July 3, 1915:

. . . "If I believed in war I'd be proud of war and say so. As I don't believe in war I'm ashamed of war and say so. I not only don't believe in this war: I don't believe in any war. . . . I'm not pro-anything except pro-myself. I'm pro-Traubel. And being pro-Traubel means being anti many things. For instance, I'm anti-patriotic. I'm anti-national. I'm anti-country. I'm anti any theory which draws border lines between peoples. And I apply that principle without qualification. To the Chinaman as well as to the American. To the wild men of Borneo as well as to the tamed men of Harvard College. To the lowest, so-called, as well as to the highest, so-called.

"In Europe I'm looking these days for popular as distinguished from geographical or dynastic results. I care nothing for the great empires. I only care for the crowd out of which empires have been welded. The grandiose empires may dissolve today and I'd not shed a tear over their remains. I want to get the earth together. I want the average man to know that this planet is the fair heritage of average men. Its bounty has been alienated. I want its noble equities to be placed where they belong.

"I care nothing for Germany but everything for Germans. So do I care nothing for France but everything for Frenchmen. And I can bring my statement home and say I care nothing for America but everything for Americans.

"That's the way I believe in war. . . . I don't care how soon all the kings are gone; how soon all

the armies and navies are abolished. You couldn't get me mad by knocking the German or any other army out. And you couldn't get me mad by sinking the English or any other navy in the deepest seas. I want everything that comes between people got out of the way. Armies and navies come between. Therefore I want them out of the way. But they're not the only thing I want out of the way. *I want all the plutocracies out of the way. All the landlords, money lords and profit lords the world over out of the way. I want all of them without exception out of the way. For they constitute the master obstruction. They are the perennial threat, they are the inexorable and inevitable elements of human disaster. Till they're removed nothing can prevent the recurrence of wars. When they're out of the way there will be no reason for wars.*

"The sort of pacifism that expects to stop war without incontinently cutting off the root of the evil is as useless as the sort of truculency that goes round about the earth saying nothing was ever done by man except through force."

The following piece which was written in reference to the violation of Belgium's neutrality by Germany, and the subsequent ravaging of that country by the Teutons, appeared in The Times, July 2, 1915:

"When the player gets into a great passion over Hecuba and sheds tears the amazed Hamlet sort of asks: What is he to Hecuba, what is Hecuba to him, that he should go on so about it? The world is full of neutrality actors today, and we are amazed at their tears. Frank Harris calls this lacrymose sentimentalism 'snobbery in excelsis!' No one can deny that in great masses of people the emotion over Belgium is sincere and profound. But there are others, and these others are the people on top anywhere who can violate

the neutrality of labor without a pang and yet profess to be overcome by the woes of Belgium. What can we make of a man like Roosevelt? He says the most violent things about Germany — and yet he confesses that when he was President he grabbed the isthmus to build the canal.

"After all that England has stolen what right has she to protest against theft? Looking at Russia and Finland, looking at England and Persia, looking at France and Morocco, looking at Belgium and the Congo, looking at Italy and Tripoli — who has the right to snarl at German heels? This is not to excuse Germany, but to explain the hypocrites. There's not a government in Europe whose ministers wouldn't lie, rob and murder to the limit in the interests of what it considers its individual destiny.

"Wilson berates Mexico. Mexico can't help it. If Mexico could help it Wilson would shut up. McKinley destroyed the Boers by giving the English horses, and he seized the Philippines without asking them for leave or us for a warrant. England and France worked out their plans in Morocco like a couple of cowardly footpads. We talk about the way the Germans treated the Belgians. The Germans talk about the way we treated the Filipinos and treat the Negroes.

"If a nation is little and can't protect itself we go to it with a musket on our shoulder. If it's big and can resist us, we go to it with our hat in our hands. In England they talk of a plebiscite for Alsace-Lorraine. But if they'd talk in Germany of a plebiscite for Ireland, South Africa, Egypt and India, they'd be considered preposterous. Yet I say yes. I say let people go where they choose. What do you suppose Ireland would choose were she given a chance? Get rid of cant. Don't pretend that you're in favor of autonomy to small peoples when you know you're not

in favor of autonomy for people. You censure any crime in Poland and you condone any crime in America. To see Germans shooting Belgians breaks your heart. But to see your own soldiers shooting the laborers in Colorado strikes you as the assertion of the necessary supremacy of the law. What you have to say of the submarine depends upon whose submarine you're talking about. You know it does. What you say of aeroplanes and gases depends upon whose aircraft and whose gas. You know it does. What is a man-of-war? Not only the boat that's armed. The boat that bears arms. You know it is. What is a fortified city? A city that tries to protect itself against assault. If a dirigible crosses a city any city tries to protect itself. Therefore, any city is a fortified city. You know it is. What is war itself? The terror of terrors. To be made as ghastly and cruel as the devil brain of man can make it. So's the enemy may be forced to squeal. Even if the non-combatants are included among the victims of its cowardly barbarism. You know it is. Who are the innocent non-combatants? Not only the people who are not forced to go to war. Also the people who are forced to go to war. So that in order to get the guilty you've got to kill non-combatants. For they're always the people who start the war. You know that's so. You can well understand how many of your notions will have to be revised if you stop being a braying echo and become an accountable man.

"For a man who's against some war or most wars it's hard to stop short of being against all wars. In order to be for some war and not for some other war he's got to draw impossible distinctions between cruelty and kindness, murder and killing, what is called barbarous and what is called humane. Who is the non-combatant? Certainly not the people at home who are engaged in the work of supplying the army

with arms and food and clothing and everything else to keep it going. . Certainly not the moneylenders who finance the war. Certainly not the taxpayer who puts up his percent. Who is the non-combatant? Is it the private American who sells anything in arms and food or miscellanies to help keep an army equipped? Is it the American government that permits the stuff to be shipped?

"Then I'm in favor of having everybody murdered? Not at all. I'm in favor of having nobody murdered. I'm only trying to show how difficult, how impossible, it is, even on the war basis, to show who should be murdered. And as we can't determine who's to be murdered, it's left to us to decree indiscriminate slaughter or to refuse to murder at all. If it's better in the individual law, and in the individual life, that twenty guilty men should escape than that one innocent man should be persecuted, so it's better in war that twenty guilty prime ministers should go free than that the innocent, even if unknown citizen or soldier, should be destroyed.

"If that's an argument for war make the most of it. But I still say even in using the war code as the criterion war is condemned. As it's impossible to fix the guilt, so it's impossible to fix the punishment.

"If war's any right to be war, war's got any right to be as horrible as the impulse to kill may be made to be. I who hate war always. I who don't believe in defensive war, have every right to object to war. But you who believe in war conditionally, and you who believe in war unconditionally, whether you're a half coward or a whole brute, have no ground upon which to qualify your code. You lug international law into sight. International law is national chaos. There's no such thing. There's inter-human law. But international law is meaningless.



"Why should we seriously argue about grading murder? I don't want you to look my way. But I do want you to look one way. I want to clear up your confusions. Almost simultaneously while England was objecting to the victimizing of non-combatants on the Lusitania English mobs were victimizing non-combatants in English and South African cities. It's all wrong, of course. But it's as much wrong for one as for the other. As Brandes says, we're now living in a sort of moral bankruptcy in which all the ordinary principles of right and wrong are outraged.

"Governments are allowed any crime. Individuals are allowed no crime. Governments are working out their designs as they please. Some of us, not disguising our contempt for all governments as they exist, are trying to work out the new designs as human fraternity pleases."

Traubel took the view that wars are no longer started by monarchs and presidents, but by antagonistic capitalistic groups. No one but a silly sentimentalist living in the past believes that the killing of the Austrian archduke and his consort by the Servian student caused the war. That act precipitated it, but did not *cause* it. The fundamental *cause* of the recent war and of wars that may be in store for the future lies solely in the competitive commercial system, or Capitalism. It is the inevitable result of the manner in which the world conducts its business affairs. Industrial, rather than political influences dominate the great nations and empires of the earth today, and it is patent to all students and observers of world affairs that industrial oligarchies have superseded, in actual power, political governments.

It is a matter of no particular concern to the working class whether their dictator is a monarch or a

president, for behind each is the great industrial oligarchy that determines the manner in which the ruler shall rule. Monarchs and presidents cannot plunge their countries into war without the consent of the capitalist classes immediately involved.

From the viewpoint of the oligarchy war or peace is purely a matter of commercial expediency. This has been proved beyond peradventure. War is Capitalism gone mad. It is the crazy consequence of insane industrialism. Remove profit and interest from business at home and there would be no incentive for businessmen reaching out for foreign trade. When capitalistic groups seek foreign trade, competing with other capitalistic groups for that particular business, the scramble for spoils simply implies that the working classes are underpaid and therefore cannot afford to buy back the goods which they produce and need, and which their exploiters and masters seek to dump into foreign markets. Of course capitalists would rather sell at home than abroad, because it is generally cheaper and more convenient, but since they do not pay their workers sufficient wages to enable them to buy back that which the workers produce the capitalists are obliged to ply their trade on alien soil.

When the capitalists, let us say, of England, bagged their game in South America, or Africa, or China or any other fresh outlet for their commerce, and were reaping huge profits from their process of exploitation, the procedure excited the jealousy of, let us say, German capitalists who also found their warehouses bulging with goods that German workers needed but could not buy back because of low wages. German capitalists were obliged to find foreign markets for

their goods. They sent consuls and trade experts and salesmen into foreign countries to drum up trade. These Teutonic emissaries of commerce found the market already supplied with British goods. The Germans started to manufacture their goods a little better than the English brand. They put more quality into them, and possibly shaded the price a fraction. Gradually they succeeded in capturing the market, or a sufficient corner of it to excite the enmity of England. British capitalists put up the money and Great Britain started to build the greatest navy the world had ever seen for the purpose of "ruling the waves" and restricting German commerce on the seas. This process cramped the German foreign market and German warehouses bulged again with unsold product, and German workmen were idle because they had produced more than they had money to purchase. Germany proceeded to establish the greatest army the world had ever seen. The press and pulpit and all auxiliary channels of communication in each nation preached hatred of the other people, when, in fact there was none among the people.

Gradually the German and the Briton came to actually distrust one another. Either they never knew, or they forgot that they both were victimized workingmen with nothing but a geographical and an arbitrary line separating their common interests.

German and British capitalists continued to build armament and competing in the same trade markets until the conditions became intolerable for both groups. They were ready for war and the slightest incident would provoke them to combat. The Austrian episode

furnished the excuse for war between England and Germany.

It is curiously amusing to recall the manner in which the world's press chided the European Socialists for failing to stop the war. The American press, especially, flung their ill-timed taunts at the Socialists and proclaimed the death of the International which, as a matter of fact, had existed only in theory. The International was never born in fact and therefore could not have died in fact. It is still but a dream harbored in the hearts of the world's great humanists and kept alive by the fruits of their fellowship. Of course it is obvious that the press put their taunting question in an attempt to discredit the philosophy of Socialism which is for peace under conditions that make war impossible. Traubel answered for the Socialists in an article published in the Altoona Times, April 1, 1916, as follows:

"Christians call Europe the Christian world. Yet Christians couldn't stop the war. Socialists never call Europe Socialist. Yet they were expected to stop the war. Even Christians have dared to call them names because they didn't stop the war. This is a tribute to Socialism. Christians admit they couldn't with their vast majorities stop the war. Yet they seemed to think the Socialists with their inconsiderable minorities could have stopped the war if they wished to.

"Even if we had to admit that Socialists failed we wouldn't have to admit that Socialism failed. Every Socialist could fail and yet Socialism would remain unhurt. As long as vision is less than life its votaries may fail. But when vision becomes the whole of life its devotees are unshakable.

"Socialists were not as many as some people thought they were. And Socialists were not internationally as unified as Socialists themselves supposed.

But the idea, the ideal, the dream, is still resplendently illuminating and prophetic. America established her republic in the furtherance of liberty. But liberty has not yet been achieved. Is liberty therefore denied?

"Socialism is not a journey finished but a place we're going towards. We may stumble on the way. We may sometimes stray from the direct path. But the great objective is always in sight.

"European Socialists did the best they could considering who they are and what the circumstances happened to be. Socialism hasn't gone back. All the belligerents in the war have found it necessary to adopt some of its procedure. Does that look like going back?

"The significant Socialist development of the war is not found in what avowed Socialists are doing or have failed to do. It's found in what the governments have been compelled to do.

"Instead of the war demonstrating that Socialism has failed it has demonstrated that nothing but the Socialism in the war has succeeded. Liebknecht is one of the most heroic as well as one of the most enlightened men in the world today. And Liebknecht's a Socialist. But much as I claim for Socialism I don't contend that this proves Socialism. Socialism as a world condition is not proved or disproved by the bravery or cowardice, by the brains or lack of brains, of Socialists.

"The fact remains that the Socialists are the most formidable body of people in the human society standing for peace whether or no. And the world admitted this by its expression of disappointment when they failed to checkmate the war in 1914. The world admitted it. That world which has done everything it could to thwart Socialism in peace. That world which impudently assumes to rebuke Socialism in war. The enemies of Socialism have even gone so far as to taunt

Socialists with being anyway only mortally average instead of supermen. Socialists taken all in all don't fool themselves with grandiose ideas of their personal importance. They know this is no world as it is for supermen. But they also know that the world as it must become under Socialism will make it possible for the supermen to appear.

"Whatever may have occurred in the war to perplex the Socialist, the fact that the fighting governments on both sides have found it absolutely necessary to abandon individualism for public operations in industry and in the husbandry of personality and wealth has shown the unquestionable verity of Socialist speculation. Governments may go back after the war. But Socialism won't go back."

Here again we see in Traubel, the optimist and the prophet, contemplating the future in the midst of chaos that seemed to challenge even the certainties of existence. He said the war was to be the suicide of kings and the sunrise of the people. Beyond the blood-drenched battlefields, over the gory trenches, rising higher and higher above the denuded forests, the shell-torn prairies, and the cities of desolation where all was agony and death, Traubel, the poet of the peasantry of the world, discerned in the scarlet sky the star of hope. In the midnight of mourning he anticipated the golden day that should bring strength and courage and wisdom to the uncounted captives of civilization.

Traubel said: "Any brute can be equal to war. But it takes a man to be equal to peace." When President Woodrow Wilson told a Philadelphia audience that the best country was that which was "too proud to fight," many radical thinkers and pacifists thought they saw behind the President's words an unspoken expression

of pacifism. They were wrong. Traubel said: "When the war interests clamored he became one of its apologists." Recent history has proved Traubel was right.

As to nationalism versus internationalism Traubel said: "Nations are born of the letter of history. But the world is born of its spirit. A nation is only a stage of growth part of the way up. The world is all the way up. Until a nation becomes a world, until all nations become worlds, you haven't proved your capacity for justice and brotherhood. And until you've proved your capacity for justice and brotherhood nothing else you've proved will dignify and ennoble your ambitions. When we can prove that we can love to let others live and can live to let others love we've proved ourselves to be something more than a nation."

Traubel was intensely enthusiastic over the Irish rebellion of Easter Monday, 1916. He called it a beautiful demonstration of proletarian solidarity. He said: "I'm not interested in having more nations. But I am interested in having more republics. And in the end the little republics will lead to the big republic. I do want peoples to be satisfied. To have the sort of government they want. Or to have no government at all if they don't want any. I want to see the combinations as vast as possible. But I want them to be free combinations. I want people to be together because they want to be together, not because armies and navies force them to be together.

"Ireland has always objected to being a part of the British empire. It should be allowed to go. When a brave and beautiful people want to say goodbye we

should God bless them with the fraternal right hand instead of God damning them with paper constitutions and invading soldiers. I don't think republics are ultimate. But they come next. And the republic is a passage way to the commune."

Many American Socialists while consistently opposed to war when the possibility of armed conflict with a European Power was exceedingly remote, became defenders of the nationalistic conception of government and fell in line with the war spirit. The Socialist Party, however, went on record as being unqualifiedly opposed to war. Through it all Traubel never wavered from his first principles. He never justified force, even though out of human struggle do come some of the fruits of peace.

In 1916, when the United States was aroused over the question of preparedness for the war that came to America a year later, Eugene V. Debs wrote the following about Traubel:

"The pen of Horace Traubel is one of the most vigorous and incisive ever wielded against war and in favor of peace and good will among nations and men.

"Horace Traubel's instinct against war and bloodshed is as deeply rooted and all-pervading as is his passion for love and service to his fellow-men.

"The series of brilliant articles recently written by Traubel in *The Conservator* and in other papers and periodicals ought to be read by all the millions of misguided people who are still crying for preparedness, and who in spite of all history still cherish the vicious delusion that war is the way to peace.

"Traubel writes in a telling, epigrammatic fashion all his own. His short sentences are all charged with lightning. To him war is a monstrous and unmitigated crime without an extenuating circumstance in



its favor. It is simply murder in its most vicious, abhorrent and inexcusable extremity.

"When Traubel read an editorial in a Canadian paper declaring that only when a nation knew how to fight did it become a nation, he answered in a terrific broadside that blew that editor to atoms.

"Said he: 'If you prove yourself a nation by war, you prove yourself a better nation by more war and a best nation by entire devotion to war. . . . The fact is we long ago proved we can fight. But we never yet proved our ability not to fight. To know how to fight is still at the best only barbarism. To know how not to fight is at the worst still civilization.'

"Horace Traubel is one of the supreme liberators and humanitarians of this age. It is a thousand pities that so few of the common people he is giving his life to actually know him. It is the tragic fate of such men to die before they begin to live. Traubel is not only the pupil of old Walt Whitman but the master democrat of his time and the genius incarnate of human love and world-wide brotherhood."

I'LL SEE IT ALL FROM  
SOMEWHERE



I'LL SEE IT ALL FROM SOMEWHERE

I'll see it all from somewhere:  
I'm not afraid that I'll be cut off from you or that you'll be  
cut off from me:  
I'm not afraid that the thing I helped do here I'll not still  
help do from somewhere:  
I'm not afraid that what we call death closing my eyes will  
not open my eyes again:  
I dont bother because a curtain is dropped: I'm always one  
side of the curtain:  
And maybe after seeing for the last time I'll begin really to  
see for the first time:  
And who knows but after working in the dark here I may  
not work in the light there:  
For I dont know how God or anything else could make us  
less than brothers after we have once been brothers:  
For when I say brother I dont talk carelessly: I say what  
the sun says when it says light:  
Which makes it easy for me here today in the press of the  
struggle to forecast the years to come:  
So that no matter where I may be I'll always answer the roll-  
call: I'll always answer: Here!  
Dear brother: that makes me feel so good: for I want to  
be with you one place or another always:  
You'll bury me in the ground maybe: but do you think I'll  
stay in the ground?  
Or you'll maybe burn me in a fire: but do you think I'll  
disappear in the smoke out of a chimney?  
There's more to me than that: you'll find me equal to that  
and more:  
If there was no more to me than could be eaten by the  
worms in the earth or consumed by the flames of a  
furnace:  
If there was no more to me than could be paid for in full  
by the body that houses me;

If there was no more to me than you shake hands with and  
say how do you do or goodbye to when we meet:

If there was no more to me than I make into a shoe or write  
into a book:

If there was no more to me than that then there' wouldn't be  
enough of me to be your brother:

If there was no more to me to last on then there'd never have  
been enough of me to begin with:

And so I'm happy looking about me seeing you all being next  
you all:

And so I'm happy touching you with my hands kissing you  
with my lips these days these nights:

And so I'm happy wrestling with you with the stubborn soil  
coupling our dreams against the drag of time and space:

And so I'm happy brothering you being brothered sure as  
I am that my hand will reach your hand far or near  
forever:

And so I'm happy: being glad to be where I am, being will-  
ing to be anywhere I'm put: matched with you against  
all the odds of defeat:

Sure that you'll feel me from there: sure that I'll feel you  
from here: sure, sure, sure:

Whatever happens, sure: whatever succeeds or fails, sure:  
whatever comes to you or me, sure:

I'll see it all from somewhere.

I'll see it all from somewhere:

All that I helped come true: I'll see it come true:

When the crowds assemble in their remade world look for  
me: I'll be there:

I dont say anybody'll see me: I dont say I'll be there in  
my old person:

I may be forgotten: but I'll be there to those who listen for  
me: and to those who look for me: I'll be there:

My name may not be sounded in the hurrahs! but the name  
that you hear will be my name diffused:

And though some of you may still stubbornly deny me I'll  
conquer in your unintended applause:

Though as for that I dont care; I'll make myself at home  
in your assemblages;

## I'LL SEE IT ALL FROM SOMEWHERE 159

And when the orators speak, when the musicians play, something like my voice will haunt you:  
And you'll look restlessly at each other wondering what it is that so came to you half veiled, half revealed:  
And you'll feel me at your ears: I'll sting you with unhesitating accusations: I'll be so severe with you:  
And you'll see me before your eyes: I'll stand there gesturing towards you with arms wide open: I'll be so kind with you:  
And the dear simple friendly little odds and ends of memory will overwhelm you:  
And then you'll know I have no more died being dead than you have died being alive: not a bit more:  
And then you'll know that I'm one of the crowd today just as I always was: one of the crowd:  
Passing in and out: passing over and under: passing to and from: just as I always was: one of the crowd:  
Come back to enjoy with you the rich harvest: come back to taste with you the fruit of our comrade husbandry:  
Listen: dont you hear me now just as if that time was already come? dont you hear me?  
Look: dont you see me now just as if that time was already come? dont you see me?  
I'll see it all from somewhere.

I'll see it all from somewhere:

So what does it matter whether I see it from here or from there? what does it matter?  
So what does it matter as we put the seed in the ground together for the next world? what does it matter?  
So what does it matter as we share the pain and the joy of the journey towards the horizon? what does it matter?  
So what does it matter as we lie down together to rest and get up together to labor? what does it matter?  
So what does it matter whether it's here or there so it's somewhere? what does it matter?  
So that I feel you what does it matter whether it's here or there? what does it matter?  
So that I see you what does it matter whether it's here or there? what does it matter?

So that we're brothers what does it matter whether we're  
brothers here or there? what does it matter?

So that someone gets the crop what does it matter who planted  
the seed? what does it matter?

So that the day appointed comes what does it matter whether  
it's my day or your day? what does it matter?

I'll see it all from somewhere.

HORACE TRAUBEL.

From The Conservator,  
October, 1912.

THE END.







